PROBLEMS OF COMMUNISM

JULY
AUGUST | 1970

The Limits of Charisma

FRAGMENTED LEFT

CHE IN BOLIVIA

The Communist Parties

Cuba's "Old" Communists

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JUL-AUG 1970
VOL. XIX
4

PROBLEMS OF COMMUNISM

Problems of Communism is a bimonthly publication. Its purpose is to provide analyses and significant background information on various aspects of world communism today. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Government. Editorial office: U.S. Information Agency, 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20547.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE: Outside of the United States, *Problems of Communism* may be obtained by writing to the nearest office of the U.S. Information Service. Residents of the United States may purchase annual subscriptions or single copies by writing to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Price per copy: $.50. Subscription price: $3.00.

Editor: ***Theodore Frankel***
Managing Editor: ***Marie Thompson House***
Associate Editor: ***Clarke H. Kawakami***

Cover: *Dee Fairchild*

CURRENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

1 Fragmentation of the Marxist Left, *by Luis E. Aguilar*
12 Castro: The Limits of Charisma, *by Edward Gonzalez*
25 Che in Bolivia: The "Revolution" That Failed, *by Robert F. Lamberg*
37 The Communist Parties of Latin America, *by Robert J. Alexander*

Books

47 The Red and the Black, *by William J. Parente*
51 The Obstacles to Reform, *by Arpad J. von Lazar*
53 Old Doctrines and New Classes, *by Karl Schmitt*
55 The Import of Ideologies, *by Victor Alba*
57 Reviews in Brief

History in Perspective

61 The Rise and Fall of a Party: The Cuban CP (1925–59), *by Boris Goldenberg*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Currents in Latin America

EDITORS' NOTE: This special issue is devoted to a number of current developments on the Latin American Marxist Left. It comes out at a time when that volatile movement seems to be heading toward several decision points all at once: Castro, who has dominated Latin American socialism for much of the past decade, appears to be pondering choices affecting the very nature of his regime, for reasons discussed by Edward Gonzalez in his essay; rural guerrilla warfare has sustained a series of setbacks, the most important of which (Guevara's Bolivian expedition in 1967) is incisively analyzed by Mr. Lamberg; the fragmentation of the Marxist Left, described by Mr. Aguilar, seems to be intensifying—even while opening up possibilities for contact with other sociopolitical groups, as Mr. Alexander has occasion to observe in his survey of the Communist parties on the continent. Only the old-time Communist parties have so far remained relatively immobile; much of their orientation and mode of operation becomes intelligible, by analogy, from Mr. Goldenberg's detailed history of the Communist Party of Cuba.

In the future, we hope to supplement this issue with case studies of Latin American parties and movements, including the recently revived urban guerrillas, as well as with analyses of outside influences on the Latin American Left—in particular, the policies and activities of the Soviet Union and Communist China.

Fragmentation of the Marxist Left

By Luis E. Aguilar

At the onset of the 1970's, leftist parties and movements are torn by dissension and disunity almost everywhere, except in countries where well-ensconced authoritarian regimes of the Left are in a position to impose ideological unity by force. This general condition of the "fragmented Left," as it has been called, is particularly evident in Latin America, where revolutionary sects—many of various Marxist stripes—keep proliferating, and where factional disputes are so constant and sometimes so extremely bitter as to give the impression of a general inability to agree upon coordinated programs or effective action. Indeed, so strong is the impression of disarray on the Left that at least one

A former Professor of History at the University of Oriente in Cuba, Mr. Aguilar is now with the Department of History of Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. He authored Marxism in Latin America *(New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1968).*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

observer, in an impressionistic survey of the continent, reached the conclusion that—appearances to the contrary notwithstanding—Latin America is an "unrevolutionary society." [1]

This fragmentation of the Latin American Left (which did not become apparent till after 1945 [2]), and the tendencies causing it, derive from two different sets of circumstances. The first had its roots in the decade preceding the end of World War II—when, paradoxically, the Marxist Left enjoyed unprecedented cohesion—while the second is entirely a postwar phenomenon.

Beginning in 1935, when the Communist parties of Latin America abandoned their policy of political isolation in response to Moscow's call for the creation of popular fronts of all "anti-fascist" forces, they constituted the mainstream of Marxism in Latin America. This was perhaps not surprising in view of the support they were receiving from Moscow (then still the unchallenged source of Marxist doctrine) and their ability to effect continent-wide Communist unity thanks to Comintern discipline and a common ideology. Indeed, several Communist parties, *e.g.*, those of Chile and Cuba, became strong enough to play significant roles in the politics of their respective countries.

However, the very expansion of Communist objectives and influence required the adoption of programs and tactics which were to contribute materially to the subsequent splintering of the Left in Latin America. For, in collaborating with a variety of leftist and non-leftist elements at home, they relaxed their revolutionary stance by approving legal (*i.e.*, parliamentary) means of gaining power; and in a display of political realism, which was to be condemned by other leftists as "opportunism," they entered into collaboration with governments which were anything but democratic, such as those of Batista in Cuba and Peñaranda in Bolivia.

At the same time, their support of the Soviet policy of alliance with the West led the Communists during World War II to proclaim their faith in the democratic character of what, in a reversal of their propaganda line, they began calling the "ex-imperialist" governments of Great Britain, the US and other Western powers.[3]

These various policy lines were discredited at the end of the war, and Communist influence and leftist unity alike were impaired as a result of the drastic changes in the international situation and the coincident outbreak of a number of popular rebellions in Latin America. The disintegration of the wartime alliance and the initiation of the Cold War between the USSR and the Western powers shortly after 1945 compelled the Latin American Communist parties to execute yet another abrupt about-face on foreign policy and to repudiate their well-remembered praises for what their propaganda was now again referring to as the "imperialist" governments. Since this change seemed prompted by Moscow's bidding rather than by Latin American needs, it laid the Communists open to charges of subservience to the Soviet Union—charges which were all the more damaging because they originated not only from the Trotskyites, who in their usual polemical style dubbed the Communists the "Stalinist" and "Sepoy" Left,[4] but also from other newly-organized groups of leftists disillusioned with the "opportunistic" tactics of the Communists.

Similarly, the end of the war created a situation which, at least in the eyes of numerous newcomers to the Latin American Left (drawn from among such groups as ex-officers, students, and young radicals), discredited the Communists' recent advocacy of gradual and legal changes in the political system. For the cessation of hostilities put an end to the wartime boom which had brought temporary relief from the continent's endemic problems arising from lagging industrial development, backward agriculture, social stratification, and rapid population growth. The return to the "normality" of prewar underemployment and poverty in a political climate characterized by a heightened awareness of the needlessness of those conditions gave rise to widespread and vocal demands for drastic and rapid improvements in Latin America's economic and social situation. And since many despaired of

[1] *Cf.* John Mander, *The Un-Revolutionary Society*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1969.

[2] See Luis E. Aguilar, Ed., *Marxism in Latin America*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1968, pp. 38–40.

[3] Brazilian Communist leader F. Lacerda denied the existence of North American imperialism altogether and declared that the slogan "struggle against every form of imperialism" was of Trotskyite and Nazi origin. See "The Fascist Coup d'Etat in Brazil" in *The Communist International* (New York), Vol. XV, No. 1, January 1938, p. 46.

[4] To the best of this author's knowledge, the first of the new leftist groups to criticize the Communists' lack of political consistency was the Argentinian MIR (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*—Movement of the Revolutionary Left) in 1945. The label "Sepoy Left" (taken from the 19th-century Indian mercenaries who fought in the service of the British Empire) as a term of opprobrium applied to the Communists had its widest currency among the Argentinian *Nueva Izquierda Nacional* (New National Left), whose best-known theoretician, Jorge Abelardo Ramos, leaned toward a Trotskyite position.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

accomplishing such economic and social improvements without radical changes in the political structure of Latin American societies, new political groups like Bolivia's *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (*Nationalist Revolutionary Movement*) or MNR, Venezuela's *Accion Democratica* (Democratic Action), and Chile's *Partido Democrata Cristiano* (Christian Democratic Party), to mention only some of the more important ones, put forward demands for revolutionary political and economic action, such as the nationalization of certain national resources, the expropriation of some types of foreign investments, comprehensive agrarian reforms, and the introduction of universal suffrage, which gained them mass support and catapulted them into power. (The Bolivian MNR came to power in 1952; Venezuela's *Accion Democratica* played a leading role in the downfall of Perez Jimenez and came to power in 1958; and Eduardo Frei's Christian Democrats took over the reigns of the Chilean government in 1964). By comparison with these dynamic new elements, the old-line Communist parties—compromised by the memory of their accommodation with dictators and clinging to a policy of working within the established system—seemed politically passive and lacking in revolutionary élan, at least to the younger radical elements of the Left. The widespread feeling that the Communists were incapable of promoting real change in Latin America was perhaps most succinctly expressed by the biting comment current among Bolivian Socialists after the 1952 victory of the MNR. "The Communists," the saying went, "are the post-revolutionary vanguard of the non-revolutionary rear guard." By the beginning of the 1960's, a New Left had emerged in Latin America whose contempt for orthodox Marxism introduced a deep rift in the ranks of the Latin American Left.[5]

Postwar Rifts

In addition to these divisive tendencies stemming from pre-World War II Communist policies, three postwar developments caused a further splintering of the Left in Latin America. In chronological order they were Khrushchev's secret speech to the 20th CPSU Congress in February 1956, in which he first revealed Stalin's crimes, the emergence into public view of the Sino-Soviet conflict in 1960, and the challenge to the Communist line favoring the legal road to power laid down by Castro's advocacy—from 1962 until very recently—of guerrilla warfare as the only correct revolutionary strategy for Latin America.

Khrushchev's attack on Stalin inferentially implicated a number of major Latin American Communist leaders—such as the Stalinists Victorio Codovilla, Secretary-General of the Communist Party of Argentina, and Blas Roca, Secretary-General of the Communist Party of Cuba—and forced all Latin American Communist parties to re-evaluate and readjust their policies and propaganda lines. Despite the traditional hold of Communist discipline, these changes were not accomplished without serious splits in the movement,[6] accompanied by renewed charges of subservience to Moscow on the part of the existing party leaderships. Fortunately for the prestige of the Latin American Communist leaders, the 20th CPSU Congress did give them ideological backing by proclaiming for the first time that armed struggle was not the only correct method of attaining power—a thesis which was enunciated by Moscow in furtherance of Khrushchev's policy of detente between the great powers, but which happened to conform to the policy pursued by the Latin American Communist parties since 1935.

The split among Latin American leftists was widened by the impact of the Sino-Soviet dispute after 1960. Given the dissatisfaction of large portions of the Left with the Soviet Union's policy of international detente and their impatience with the local Communist parties' gradualist approach to the seizure of power, it was not surprising that both inside and outside of the established Communist parties a good deal of support was being generated for the Chinese doctrine positing violence and armed struggle as the only road to victory as well as for China's excoriation of the orthodox Communist line as non-revolutionary and revisionist. Moreover, Mao Tse-tung's emphasis on the leading revolutionary role of the peasants—as

[5] Thus, when the young student leader, Juan Carlos Portantiero, was expelled from the Argentinian Communist Party for excessive radicalism, he was followed out of the party by almost all the active young Communists in his department at the University of Buenos Aires. Such incidents caused considerable soul-searching among the party leadership.

[6] For a description of dissenting attitudes, see Carlos M. Pellicer (then a member of the Central Committee of the Guatemalan CP), *Renuncia al Comunismo* (Renouncing Communism), Mexico, Costa-Amic, 1964, pp. 122–23.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

opposed to the orthodox Communist doctrine of the revolutionary leadership of the industrial proletariat—found a responsive echo in a continent whose population was still overwhelmingly agrarian.

The ensuing controversy over these conflicting viewpoints aggravated the internal dissensions already existing in almost all Latin American Communist parties and led to the formation of several groups of independent Marxists which either sided —to a greater or lesser extent—with the Chinese, or took advantage of the debate to put forward their own versions of the proper Marxist road to victory.[7]

However, the importance of Mao's thought to Latin America's Left should not be exaggerated, for its impact was checked by several countervailing influences. For one, the old-guard Latin American Communist party leaders, hardened veterans of many ideological battles, not only proved immune to the attraction of the Chinese arguments, but also managed in most cases to keep their rank and file on the Soviet side of the conflict. If Victorio Codovilla was not entirely accurate when he boasted that "not one among the Latin American [Communist] parties has supported the position of the Chinese leaders," [8] he was not far from the truth. Small pro-Chinese splinter parties were organized only in Peru, Brazil and Colombia; and a few even less well-organized Chinese sympathizer groups sprang up in several other countries. Another factor undercutting pro-Chinese sentiment among the Left was the fact that the Chinese themselves and the pro-Chinese Latin American groups—notwithstanding their advocacy of armed struggle—offered only verbal assistance to such guerrilla movements as were active on the continent.[9] All in all, Chinese Communist activities in Latin America have produced only meager organizational results, but they did contribute to the further ideological fragmentation of the Left.

The third and most important postwar development spurring the fragmentation process has been the emergence of Castroism as a major ideological movement in its own right and its interaction with the rest of the Left, particularly the Communists. Since the nature of that interaction has changed repeatedly, its evolution may usefully be sketched here.

The Impact of Castroism

The first stage occurred during the years 1959-61, which witnessed the rapid and unexpected transformation of what initially had been proclaimed as a nationalistic and democratic Cuban revolution into a "socialist" revolution. It is characteristic of the ambivalent relationship between the Communists and Castro throughout that, while the Communists hailed Castro's conversion to Marxism in April 1961 as proof of the irreversible forward march of Latin America toward a "socialist" future, they also experienced considerable discomfort at his embrace. For one thing, their support of Castro in his struggle with Batista had been late and reluctant; for another, Castro's triumph had apparently been achieved through the application of guerrilla tactics at a time when the Latin American Communists were generally condemning these tactics as "adventurist" and were instead espousing the "peaceful road" to communism. However, as long as Castro was willing to appoint veteran Communists to key governmental positions in his regime and to tone down his propaganda on behalf of guerrilla warfare, Castro and the Communists were able to present a common front.

This situation lasted for about two years. By the end of this time, Castro was clearly eager to regain his political independence from the old-line Communist functionaries at home and to promote a strategy of armed insurrection on the continent at variance with existing Communist policy. He moved decisively to curb the influence of the veteran Communist party leaders, starting in 1962 with the denunciation of Anibal Escalante on charges of "sectarianism" and "personalism"—*i.e.*, of forming a sect within the newly-established United Party of the Socialist Revolution by appointing his cronies (rather than Castro's young men) to high office. Simultaneously, his propaganda accentuated the differences between his own foreign policy, particularly with respect to the export of revolution to the rest of the Latin American continent, and the Communists' ideological positions. These differences have often been misunderstood. The main points at issue were not, as has been

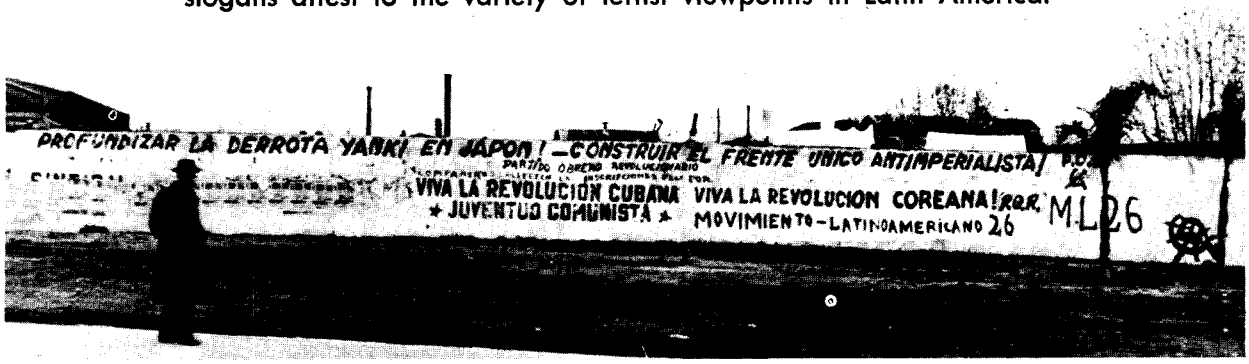
[7] "In Peru," wrote Jean Larteguy in 1967, "the division of world communism has produced a true atomization of the Left. Today one can count nine parties, movements or fronts of the extreme Left—Trotskyites, pro-Chinese, pro-Russians, Leninists, progressivists, and Socialists, and that without taking account of the most important one, the MIR . . ." *Les Guerrilleros*, Paris, Raoul Solar, 1967, pp. 330–31.

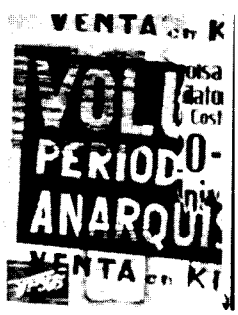
[8] Victorio Codovilla, "The Ideas of Marxism-Leninism in Latin America," *World Marxist Review* (Toronto), Vol. VII, No. 8, August 1964, pp. 46–47.

[9] The pro-Chinese Communist splinter party of Peru dismissed the guerrilla actions led by Luis de la Puente Uceda and the MIR in 1965 as "adventurist."

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Castroite, Communist, Trotskyite, socialist, syndicalist and anarchist slogans attest to the variety of leftist viewpoints in Latin America.


PROFUNDIZAR LA DERROTA YANKI EN JAPON! CONSTRUIR EL FRENTE UNICO ANTIMPERIALISTA
VIVA LA REVOLUCION CUBANA
VIVA LA REVOLUCION COREANA!
JUVENTUD COMUNISTA
MOVIMIENTO-LATINOAMERICANO 26
M.L 26



PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

frequently asserted, the question of whether the continent was or was not ready for revolution, whether armed struggle was necessary to overthrow the existing social and political structure in various Latin American countries, and whether guerrilla warfare was the most efficient method of conducting that armed struggle. Differences on these issues were either of secondary importance or susceptible to accommodation, particularly on the part of the Communists.[10]

The decisive factors that impelled the Latin American Communist parties to reject Castro's ideology as articulated in the period 1962-67 were that he assigned leadership of the revolutionary struggle to the guerrilla fighters rather than to Communist cadres, that he extolled the virtues of the peasants as the army of the popular revolution instead of the industrial proletariat, and that he downgraded political movements in the cities—where the Communists' strength was concentrated—to an auxiliary role subordinate to that of the guerrilla forces in the countryside. In short, Castro's "guerrilla formula" denied to the Communists their self-assigned role of vanguard of the revolution in Latin America and arrogated it to his own guerrilla followers.

Hence, the Communist parties embarked on a vigorous campaign to refute and discredit Castro's line, while Castro's followers on the continent went on the counteroffensive to the accompaniment of slogans demanding revolutionary action "with or without the [Communist] party." Several radical groups, such as the 13th of November movement in Guatemala, the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) or MIR, and a similarly named group in Venezuela—all of which had long derided the Communist parties in their countries as passive, bureaucracy-ridden, and even reactionary organizations—went even farther: they broke their last links with the Communists and, in a conscious effort to reenact Castro's Cuban campaign, promoted active guerrilla groups. They were spurred on by the expectation, at that time universal among members of the radical Left, of an early and total victory.[11]

However, before the split between the Castroites and the Communists could spread too far, the latter undertook to make certain concessions by modifying some major tenets of their policy. They did this partly because they were impressed by the appearance of numerous guerrilla groups and by Castro's growing prestige, and partly because they found themselves exposed to pressures from the New Left and were afraid of being caught "tailing behind events," to use one of Lenin's favorite expressions of abuse. Perhaps the clearest expression of this change of line was contained in a statement by the Venezuelan Communist leader Pompeyo Marquez (by then incarcerated in a Venezuelan prison). Published in the January 1964 issue of the Chilean Communist newspaper *El Siglo*, the statement explicitly declared that "the time of illusions concerning the possibility of achieving revolutionary ends by peaceful means is ended . . . what the masses are really waiting for is revolutionary action, armed combat."

In the spirit of that tactical reappraisal, the Communist Party of Venezuela joined with several other extremist groups in establishing the [Venezuelan] *Fuerzas de Liberacion Nacional* (National Liberation Forces) or FLN, and its armed branch, *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional* (Armed Forces of the National Liberation) or FALN, whose terrorist activities earned it considerable, if rapidly diminishing, fame in Venezuela. The Communist parties of Colombia and Peru also contemplated the inception of a new and violent phase of revolutionary activities, and even the Uruguayan party, through its First Secretary, Rodney Arismendi (who has usually played the role of moderator between extremes), forecast the early initiation of violent struggle in democratic and peaceful Uruguay[12]—a country which, as Arismendi sarcastically remarked, has traditionally been considered "the Switzerland of Latin America."

This phase of Communist-Castroite rapprochement lasted until 1966, when a new stage in their relations began—a stage marked by the diminution of Castro's influence over the Latin American Left, the end of Communist concessions to Castro

[10] An instructive discussion by a Venezuelan Communist on the subject of which of Castro's ideological planks are acceptable to the Communists and which are not can be found in Pompeyo Marquez, "Una Polemica Necesaria," (A Necessary Polemic) *Documentos Politicos* (Caracas), Vol. I, No. 7, January 15, 1968, pp. 17–47.

[11] At the time, the expectation of an early guerrilla victory was well-nigh universal among the leftist revolutionary groups. For a discussion of the plans of these groups, see the testimony of the Venezuelan Minister of Defense on the contents of captured guerrilla documents, in *El Nacional* (Caracas), April 25, 1962.

[12] *Cf.* Rodney Arismendi, "Algunos problemas teoricos y estrategicos de la revolucion en Uruguay" (Some Theoretical and Strategic Problems of the Revolution in Uruguay), *Documentos Politicos* (Bogota), Octover–November 1966, pp. 50–62.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coupled with the Communists' return to their traditional line, and—after a considerable delay—a tentative shift on Castro's part in the direction of the current Communist position. As we shall see, however, this new and hesitant reconciliation between the two major ideological forces of the Latin American Marxist Left did not put a stop to the trend toward leftist fragmentation.

A New Phase

The decline of Castro's influence among the Left in Latin America is attributable, above all, to the series of disastrous setbacks and defeats suffered by armed guerrilla movements in practically all parts of the continent from late 1965 to 1967. For the purposes of this article, it would lead too far afield to discuss these failures in any detail; suffice it to mention here the names of some of the more prominent of the many fallen leaders who symbolized both the heroism and the futility of Castro-type guerrilla struggles—Luis de la Puente Uceda of the Peruvian MIR, who died at the hands of Peruvian army troops as early as December 1965; Father Camilo Torres, who had joined the *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* (National Liberation Army) of Colombia just one month prior to his death in the field on February 16, 1966; and Turcios Lima of the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* (Rebel Armed Forces) or FAR of Guatemala, who was killed in battle with government troops in October 1966. In this still growing list of guerrilla failures, the capture of Régis Debray and the death of Ernesto Che Guevara in Bolivia in late 1967 were only the most dramatic events demonstrating the inability of guerrilla movements to pose a serious threat to Latin American governments. The latest name to be added to the list is that of Captain Yon Sosa, leader of the *Movimiento 13 de Noviembre* (13th of November Movement) of Guatemala, who met his death on Mexican soil in May 1970.[13]

This debunking of Castro's "guerrilla formula" in the light of what Marxists would call "revolutionary praxis" led, not surprisingly, to a questioning of the entire Castroite theory of revolution and a re-examination of the myth that had grown up around Castro's victory in 1959 and underlay much of that theory. It turned out on closer examination[14] that the myth, on the basis of which the continental guerrillas had been modeling their movements, greatly simplified the actual events of 1959, reducing what was in fact a complex set of circumstances favoring Castro to a heroic single-handed triumph of peasant rebels fighting in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra.

The myth, for instance, ignored a number of factors that were indispensable to Castro's victory. These included the support given to Castro by Cuba's middle class and parts of the upper class because he represented himself as the leader of a moderate, democratic movement; the demoralization of the Cuban army, rendered vulnerable to Castroite propaganda by the knowledge that it was propping up a corrupt and unpopular regime; and Washington's posture of neutrality between Batista and Castro—a stance adopted because of US sensitivity to charges of having been overly friendly to a number of deposed Latin American dictators, such as Juan Peron of Argentina, Rojas Pinilla of Colombia, and Perez Jimenez of Venezuela.

All of these factors were missing in the revolts of the post-Castro guerrilla fighters, largely as a result of Castro's own activities after attaining power, such as the rapid transformation of Cuba into a rigid "socialist" system, the Cuban leader's call for total war against the existing political systems on the continent, and the challenge he threw down to the United States as his foremost enemy. In consequence, the guerrilla leaders following Castro had no option but to declare their radical and uncompromising aims from the very beginning, thus forfeiting the support of a number of elements whose counterparts in Cuba had materially aided Castro on his road to power.[15] They also had

[13] Marcos Yon Sosa's career deserves attention because it offers an unusually graphic illustration of a common but often overlooked characteristic of the radical revolutionaries, namely, their ideological instability. A former officer in the Guatemalan armed forces, Yon Sosa founded the November 13th Movement under the influence of the Trotskyites in 1960; he then broke with the Trotskyites in order to reach an accommodation with Turcios Limas of the FAR, who held more orthodox Communist views; and finally, after Limas' death, he moved toward a pro-Chinese line. He met his death after crossing the Mexican border in his flight from Guatemalan troops.

[14] For an examination of the Castro myth published in North America, see Luis E. Aguilar, "Régis Debray, Where Logic Failed," *The Reporter* (New York), December 28, 1967, pp. 31–32.

[15] Both Guevara and Castro recognized the uniqueness of the Cuban experience. For an explicit justification of his moderation as a guerrilla fighter, see Fidel Castro, *El Partido Marxista-Leninista*, Buenos Aires, Edit. Rosa Blindada, 1965, p. 99. It is this background which explains the caustic reference by the leaders of the Venezuelan Communist Party to "the place where Fidel Castro would still be if he had had the idea of raising the red flag in the Sierra Maestra . . ." Cited in Luis E. Aguilar, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to battle armed forces which had learned their lesson from the Cuban experience, and finally they were faced with a US policy oriented toward assisting those resisting Castroite guerrilla insurrections. It was not surprising, then, that the guerrilla movements failed, based as they were on a misreading of the Cuban experience and, for that reason, generating a host of obstacles not encountered by Castro.

Their failure, in turn, spurred the Communists to scrap their earlier concessions to Castro on the issue of guerrilla warfare. Beginning in 1967, numerous Latin American Communist parties started to condemn as "adventurist" and "infantile revolutionism" the Castro-Debray [16] formula calling for armed struggle now, to be initiated by a revolutionary "focus" of professional guerrilla fighters backed by the peasant masses. *El Siglo,* in evaluating Che Guevara's Bolivian misadventure and its aftermath, summed up the Communists' reaction to Castro's "guerrillaism" in these words: "All this confirms that the guerrilla nucleus is not sufficient to trigger a revolution." [17] The same Communist theoreticians who, between 1964 and 1966, had at least tolerated and in some cases embraced the guerrilla formula, now specified four basic flaws in it: [18] 1) it was un-Marxist in that it downgraded the revolutionary capabilities of the urban proletariat; 2) it glorified the *caudillo* (symbolized by Castro) as the revolutionary hero instead of the masses; 3) it tended to ignore the enormous differences in economic, social and political conditions obtaining on the continent in prescribing a single formula for victory in all Latin American countries;[19] and 4) it revived long-discredited notions that the Communists have always attributed to Trotskyites and Apristas, such as the possibility of creating the necessary "objective" conditions for revolution through the acts of heroic individuals or groups, and the concept that the "anti-imperialist" struggle can be carried out simultaneously on a continent-wide basis, regardless of conditions in individual countries.

On these grounds, Communist theoreticians once again advocated the traditional Communist strategy of educating the masses for revolution by raising the level of their "subjective" political consciousness through all possible means, including elections and participation in parliamentary maneuvers, in preparation for the day when "objective" conditions would permit the assumption of power. Following up on these theoretical reconsiderations, the Venezuelan Communist Party, for one, abandoned

Thunder on the Left

Today Chinese garb is being donned by petty bourgeois radicals, who in the matter of methods of revolutionary struggle adhere to moth-eaten ideas about the "inspiring effect of direct action," ideas imported into the Rio de la Plata area half a century ago by anarchistic sects. Contrary to the Marxist orientation on mass action, these groups maintain that "direct action carried out by a handful of bold men can rouse the people and hasten the social revolution. These concepts are akin to Blanquism or to the antiquated Socialist-Revolutionary and populist idea (borrowed today by the APRA youth and certain nationalistic petty bourgeois trends in Latin America) that the leading role in our revolution belongs to the peasant and not to the proletarian masses. It is worth noting that of late (influenced by groups with Trotskyite leanings) their proponents have begun to indulge in thinly-veiled criticism of Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders, accusing them of having "capitulated to the Soviet Union."

From the standpoint of party organization, the policy of the Chinese leaders is aimed at undermining unity (both on an international and on a national plane), at supporting all those who are bent on disrupting the Communist parties organizationally and ideologically.

—Rodney Arismendi, Secretary-General of Uruguayan CP, "Some Aspects of the Revolutionary Process in Latin America," *World Marxist Review,* (Toronto), October 1964, pp. 15–16.

[16] The Debray referred to is, of course, Régis Debray, who presented the classic version of Castro's theory in his book *The Revolution in the Revolution,* New York, Monthly Review Press, 1967. For a more extensive description of the Castro-Debray formula, see F. Lamberg's article in this issue.

[17] *Cf. El Siglo,* (Santiago de Chile), July 13, 1968.

[18] This author has been able to collect seven pamphlets published in 1967 by various Communist theoreticians in rebuttal of the Castro-Debray thesis. The most interesting is Rodolfo Ghioldi's *No puede haber una revolucion en la revolucion* (There Cannot be a Revolution in the Revolution), Buenos Aires, Anteo, 1967.

[19] Thus Ghioldi points out that the rural population of Argentina comes to 30 percent of the total population, while in Bolivia the analogous figure is 85 percent. See Ghioldi, *op. cit.,* p. 21.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the armed struggle in which it had until then participated, and resumed its previous tactics of participating in electoral politics.[20] They abided by that decision despite numerous splits within the FALN.

Castro's Changing Focus

Meanwhile, Castro began to edge slowly toward a less radical and uncompromising position on the question of armed revolution. To be sure, his immediate reaction to the string of guerrilla failures and the Communist criticisms of the underlying strategy was to reaffirm his faith in the guerrilla movement as the royal road to power and to turn violently against his Communist critics. Thus, early in 1967, he sharply attacked the leadership of the Venezuelan Communist Party for abandoning armed warfare and defended guerrilla leader Douglas Bravo, who had been expelled from the party for opposing the leadership on this issue. Again, in his introduction to Che Guevara's diary—which had mysteriously vanished from the safekeeping of the Bolivian army and was published in Havana in July 1968, scoring a major propaganda coup for Castro—the Cuban leader castigated the Secretary-General of the Bolivian Communist Party, Mario Monje Molina, for allegedly having abandoned Guevara and his guerrilla fighters.[21]

But even while he was still publicly committed to the guerrilla formula, Castro began slowly to retreat from it, mainly by refraining from public discussion of this and other issues which might cause disputes with the Communists. This new strategy was evidenced in a speech given by Castro on July 26, 1968—*i.e.*, very close to the date when his inflammatory introduction to Che Guevara's diary appeared in print. The speech expressed a tolerant and conciliatory view with regard to the question of differing approaches to revolutionary warfare. "Every people and every nation," said Castro, "has its way of interpreting revolutionary ideas. We do not pretend to be the most perfect revolutionaries; we do not pretend to be the most perfect interpreters of Marxist-Leninist ideas; but we do have our own ways of interpreting those ideas." [22] For the rest, the speech was devoted almost entirely to domestic affairs. This pattern of looking inward and concentrating on Cuban problems rather than on spreading revolution elsewhere persisted into 1969 and became even more pronounced in 1970, when Castro launched a massive propaganda campaign to mobilize national energies in a drive to produce ten million tons of sugar—a feat that was to be the symbol of the victory of the Cuban Revolution. But the effort ended in failure, for the sugar crop did not even reach nine million tons. In a major address on July 26, 1970, a somber Castro spoke of serious mistakes that had been committed, hinted at a change in the leadership, and foretold of a new era of hardship and sacrifices lying ahead for the Cuban people. The theme of continental guerrilla warfare was muted even more than before.

Castro's visible retreat from the guerrilla line—however temporary and opportunistic it may turn out to be—was accompanied by a definite improvement in Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union, brought about largely by Cuban initiatives. In a speech on August 23, 1968,[23] Castro defended the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, much to the consternation of many of his sympathizers. In April 1969, he presided over the founding ceremony of the Cuban-Soviet Friendship Association—an event all the more remarkable for taking place a full ten years after the inception of Soviet-Cuban relations signaled by Anastas Mikoyan's visit to the island in 1959. In July 1969, the Soviet fleet visited Havana for the first time; and in November, Soviet Defense Minister Marshal Andrei Grechko toured the island. These signs of Cuban-Soviet rapprochement drew the expected negative reactions from China, [24] as well as some unexpected criticism from Latin American guerrilla leaders. The latter included Douglas Bravo, whom Castro had defended against the Communist Party of Venezuela, and who now accused Castro of submitting to Soviet pressure and abandoning his support of the Vene-

[20] The Venezuelan Communist Party admitted openly that the principal reason for the abandonment of armed struggle was the failure of that strategy. *Cf.* "Venezuela: Communist Party Regains its Legality," *World Marxist Review* (Toronto), Vol. XII, No. 5, May 1969, pp. 41–42.

[21] Actually, the disagreement between Che Guevara and Mario Monje Molina revolved around the question of who was to be in charge of Che's Bolivian expedition, Che or the Bolivian CP. For details on this point, see the excellent introduction by Rolando Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes, in *Che: Selected Works of Ernesto Guevara*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1969, pp. 33–34.

[22] *Granma* (Havana), July 27, 1968, p. 1.

[23] *Ibid.*, Aug. 24, 1968.

[24] During the celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of the Chinese People's Republic, held in Peking on October 1, 1969, no mention was made of Castro's revolution—clearly, an intended slight.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

zuelan guerrilla fighters.[25] But despite these disparaging noises from the sidelines, the muting of the doctrinal differences between Castro and the Latin American Communist parties did much to narrow what had hitherto been the most damaging rift on the Left.

Emerging Schisms

The rapproachement between Castro and the Communists has not, however, restored the harmony that once existed in the ranks of the Latin American Left. Far from it, new schisms are constantly developing. One source of these divisions is the radical youth, who, as they come of revolutionary age, fall under the spell of guerrilla warfare. There are recurrent outbreaks of violence in scattered parts of Latin America,[26] apparently unsanctioned either by Castro or by the Communists. There has also been a dramatic increase in politically motivated kidnappings, assassinations, and other acts of urban violence carried out by extreme leftists, whose acts place the rest of the Left in the dilemma of having to repudiate a strategy long since condemned by Engels and Lenin,[27] without giving aid and comfort to the governments in power. Furthermore, a number of radical groups in Latin America, such as the Tupamaros of Uruguay,[28] are putting forward a philosophy of revolutionary action which to them seems sanctified rather than discredited by the death of Che Guevara. Furthermore, the Tupamaros claim to have found an effective amalgam of the peasant guerrilla bands promoted by the New Left and the urban organizations of the Old Left: the urban guerrillas. Thus, the continued attractiveness of different kinds of guerrilla theory and practice keep the polemic on the Left very much alive.

Another divisive factor has been the emergence on the Latin American political scene of a host of new radical elements from outside the traditional Left, whose example and doctrines are beginning to affect the beliefs and programs of the established leftist groups in various ways, thus contributing further to the splintering of the Left. One of these elements is composed of certain sections of the Catholic Church whose radical fervor seems to exceed that of many groups belonging to both the Old and the New Left. To cite two recent examples, during the disturbances of May 1969 in Cordoba, Argentina, a number of clergymen, according to reports from Uruguay, displayed a more uncompromising revolutionary attitude than did the members of any other radical group; [29] and the same source reports that in Colombia rebel priests were considered a greater menace to the existing regime than the Communist Party leadership, which accepted the legality of the elections that brought the present regime to power.[30] This new-found militancy within the Catholic Church of Latin America has not only caused some elements on the Left to question the stereotyped image of the Church as a monolithic and reactionary organization propping up the political status quo, but has also inspired many young Marxist radicals to re-examine the validity of the accepted corpus of Marxism—with results that have reinforced the centrifugal tendencies on the Left.

Still another kind of development that has had a disorienting impact on the Latin American Left is exemplified by the revolutionary program of the Peruvian military government of General Velasco Alvarado, which features the nationalization of certain US commercial properties, agrarian reform, reform of the universities, and measures to bring the disadvantaged Indian population into the mainstream of Peru's political life. The Peruvian Communists, for instance, thus find themselves caught between their recent opposition to military regimes, whom they used to call "gorillas," and their desire to associate themselves with reforms which have won the Peruvian regime widespread support among the population. Other leftist groups seem similarly torn between their antipathy to military regimes and their enthusiasm for the economic nationalism

[25] While no published documentation of Bravo's criticism of Castro is available, his views are common knowledge in Latin American revolutionary circles, and it is commonly accepted that Castro's reference (in his speech on the occasion of Lenin's Centenary) to "some revolutionary figures who have proven to be disloyal and hypocritical" was directed at Bravo.

[26] Recent reports in the Latin American press mention the recurrence of guerrilla activity in southern Brazil and the existence of guerrilla training camps in Chile.

[27] See Friedrich Engels' Preface to the 1895 Edition of Karl Marx's *Class Struggles in France, 1848–50*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962, Vol. I, pp. 131–32; and V. I. Lenin, "Left Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder," in V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, New York, International Publishers, 1967, Vol. III, pp. 339–40.

[28] So named after Tupac Amaru, a Peruvian Indian revolutionary, who was burned at the stake by the Spanish in the 18th century. For an account of the ideas and activities of this group, see "Historias con Tupamaros," *Periscopio* (Buenos Aires), Vol. I, No. 34, May 12, 1970, pp. 74–81.

[29] See unsigned editorial, "Iglesia y Cordobazo," *Marcha* (Montivedeo), June 6, 1969.

[30] *Ibid.*, Nov. 4, 1969, p. 14.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of some of these regimes. Whatever the ultimate outcome of these conflicting tendencies, the immediate result is a still further fragmentation of the Left.

Finally, Soviet diplomacy has contributed its share to the troubles of the Latin American Left (principally the Communists) by dealing on amicable terms with governments which—either occasionally or as a matter of fixed policy—are taking energetic measures against both the local Communists and other leftists. This policy of disregarding the interests of local Communist movements when it suits the national interest of the Soviet Union—which has been the object of criticism for a long time [31]—was demonstrated in Colombia in May 1967 when a visiting Soviet delegation continued to conduct negotiations with the government even though the authorities were at that time arresting several local Communists and other leftists. Incidents such as this have led to bitter recriminations between other sections of the Left [32] and the Communists, who find themselves in the unenviable position of having to justify the evident contradictions between the doctrine and the actions of the Soviet regime.

There is perhaps no better illustration of the present turbulent and confused state of the Left in Latin America (and not of the Left alone) than the political campaign for the coming September elections in Chile, which is now in full swing amidst ominous rumors of a military coup (actually, the army has intervened in Chilean politics only once during the country's long history). Of the three candidates in the running, two lead deeply divided parties or coalitions. While Jorge Alessandri has the support of the revitalized parties of the Right, Radomiro Tomic, the candidate of the Christian Democrats, presides over a party which is suffering from grave dissensions between its radical, more or less pro-Marxist elements and the more moderate groupings; and Salvador Allende, the candidate put forward by the Socialists, Communists, and other minor leftist organizations, presides over a coalition, the *Frente de Accion Popular* (Popular Action Front) or FRAP, which is encumbered by conflicts between the radicalism of several socialist groups inspired by the revolutionary ideas and programs of Castro or Mao and the relatively moderate Communists. Outside this tense electoral battle, several independent Marxist groups are arming themselves in preparation for the guerrilla warfare which they proclaim as the only correct revolutionary path for Chile.[33]

A Change of Focus

In our American situation, we believe that the Cuban Revolution made three fundamental contributions to the mechanics of revolutionary movements in America. They are: first, popular forces can win a war against an army; second, it is not necessary to wait for all the conditions for revolution to exist—the insurrectionary foco can at times create them; third, in underdeveloped America the field of armed struggle should principally be the countryside.

—From Che Guevara, Guerrilla Warfare, Havana, 1960.

Revolutionary war manifests itself through urban guerrilla war, psychological war, or rural warfare. The mainstay of urban guerrilla war or psychological war in the city is the urban guerrilla. The urban guerrilla is an implacable enemy of the government and systematically causes damage to the authorities and the men that dominate the country or exercise power.

—From Carlos Marighella, "Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla," Tricontinental (Havana), January-February, 1970.

[31] For a recent example of such criticism, see Roger Garaudy's denunciation of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, which caused his expulsion from the French CP. For his present views generally, see his *Toute La Vérité*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1970.

[32] It is significant that a recent warning sent out by a new Colombian terrorist organization, *Agrupacion Venganza* (Vengeance Group), to all diplomatic delegations to stay away from the inauguration of President Barros Pastrana specifically included Soviet diplomats. See *Diario de las Americas* (Miami), Aug. 1, 1970, p. 2.

[33] For a reasoned argument in support of the Communist rejection of guerrillaism by a Chilean Communist, see Jorge Texier, "La herencia de Lenin en la lucha contra el Izquierdismo" (Lenin's Heritage in the Struggle against Leftism) in *Principios* (Santiago de Chile), No 134, April–May 1970. For a brief exposition of the opposite view, see "Los revolucionarios deben prepararse" (The Revolutionaries Should Get Ready), published interviews with captured guerrilleros, in *Punto Final* (Santiago de Chile) June 23, 1970, pp. 6–7.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All these developments have contributed to the crisis of fragmentation in which the Latin American Left finds itself at present, bringing forth a welter of new theories and action programs. Some of the more prominent notions current among the new radical groups have been adumbrated above, such as their impatience with the status quo, their disbelief in the possibility of effecting orderly change and their penchant for direct action, their economic nationalism, their championing of the peasants, and the like. These notions defy any neat categorization. What does seem probable—at least from the perspective of 1970—is that while these vital issues may draw more elements into the leftist groups, they will continue to generate arguments and disputes which will keep the Left in Latin America in a state of disarray, confusion, and fragmentation for some time to come.

Castro: The Limits of Charisma

By Edward Gonzalez

For more than a decade since his rise to power, Fidel Castro's charisma and radical style of leadership have functioned as the linchpin of the Cuban Revolution. As the supreme *caudillo* in Cuban politics, he has had the final word in both ideological and policy determinations of the regime, and he has asserted unifying authority over factional tendencies. More important, his personal appeal has been essential in mobilizing Cuban society and stimulating popular support. In a system that has not yet developed institutions truly responsive to popular demands, Castro has provided the personal link between the regime and the masses, thereby imbuing the Cuban revolutionary process with a dynamic, populist character.

At the same time, the regime's very dependence on the personality and personal authority of its *Lider maximo* has tended to impede the institutionalization of the revolutionary process, creating tension between the need for his dominant charismatic authority and the need for a more ordered system of governance.[1] To grasp the import of this fact, it may be helpful to analyze the Cuban experience of the past decade in terms of two broad phases. In the first phase—embracing several

An Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Mr. Gonzalez visited Cuba in the summer of 1967 and again in the fall of 1968. He is the author of "Castro's Revolution, Cuban Communist Appeals, Soviet Response," World Politics, *October 1968.*

[1] Castro's own personality and dominating style resist organization inasmuch as the *Lider maximo* tends to involve himself in decision-making at lower levels. Characteristically, Fidel reportedly reacted to an early meeting on planning by exploding, "Nobody is going to put me in a straightjacket!" Quoted in Herbert L. Matthews, *Fidel Castro*, New York, Simon and Shuster, 1969, p. 324.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

critical stages of development in the years 1959–66—Castro strove to consolidate and expand his power, to transform his political revolution into a radical social revolution, and to build a socialist-communist system. In the international sphere, he developed ties with the Soviet bloc, defeated the US-sponsored invasion of Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs, survived the 1962 missile crisis, and militantly encouraged armed revolution elsewhere in the hemisphere. In this whole period—when it was necessary to break prerevolutionary patterns of internal and external dominance, and when there existed favorable conditions for doing so—Castro's charisma and radical political style were both successful and relevant to his aims.

After 1966, however, the course of the Cuban regime began to shift emphatically toward concentration on domestic economic development. In the opinion of the writer, the consequences of this shift—together with fundamental changes in Cuba's internal and external environment—raise doubts about the continued functionality of Castro's style of revolutionary leadership. Simply put, the issue is whether Cuba can develop further economically and institutionally—as well as maintain its independence—if the regime persists in clinging to the familiar elements of the Fidelista formula of leadership.

The Castro Style: 1959-66

From the first, the Cuban revolutionary process was marked and molded by Castro's disposition to take bold risks, assume defiant postures and stake out maximum objectives. For example, his radical redistributive measures and egalitarian appeals after mid-1959 alienated his erstwhile urban middle-class supporters, whose collaboration might have aided Cuba's economic development and dissipated opposition to his regime. But these policies solidified support among the rural and urban lower classes and the youth, effectively neutralizing the old political class. Similarly, he took a great risk in openly repudiating the United States and turning to the Soviet Union in early 1960; yet in the process he managed to galvanize nationalistic support at home and to secure a needed lifeline from the Soviet bloc.[2] Later, seeking to strengthen the Soviet commitment to besieged Cuba on the eve of the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, he boldly announced that the Cuban Revolution was "socialist," despite the absence of a ruling Communist party. Castro also pursued maximum objectives in his economic strategy. In 1959–1963 he embarked upon rapid industrialization despite the island's lack of natural, technological and capital resources. The failure of the industrialization program did nothing to cramp his style; reversing his developmental strategy in the mid–1960's, he set up an equally ambitious economic goal by scheduling an unprecedented 10-million-ton sugar harvest for 1970.

Of special interest were Castro's foreign policy tactics to secure and exploit Cuba's ties with the Soviet Union. As the outcome of the 1962 missile crisis demonstrated, the USSR and Cuba had basically different revolutionary objectives and strategic interests. Thus Castro had to guard against the weakening of Soviet solidarity with Cuba; at times his approach was cooperative, but almost as often he adopted defiant postures in order to maneuver Moscow into a recommitment to Havana. After the missile crisis, for example, he acidly criticized the Soviet capitulation and Khrushchev's line of "peaceful coexistence"; he exploited the Sino-Soviet schism by courting Peking; he roundly castigated the non-revolutionary character of the Moscow-oriented Latin American Communist parties; and he reaffirmed Cuba's support for the Fidelista insurgent movements in the hemisphere.[3] In the end, Moscow granted key concessions to Cuba. Two visits by Castro to the Soviet Union in 1963 and 1964 resulted, respectively, in Moscow's formal recognition of Cuba's "Communist" status (1963), and a long-term trade pact (1964) which committed the Soviet Union to purchase increasing amounts of Cuban sugar at the fixed price of 6.11 cents a pound through 1970.

These ties with the Soviet Union were crucial to the survival and development of the Cuban Revolution. Havana's links with Moscow offered the regime a greater sense of security against the possibility of US aggression. Moreover, the flow of Soviet-bloc military assistance (approximately $1.5 billion through 1969) enabled the regime to buttress its own defenses. Finally, the economic lifeline from the Soviet bloc supplied essential support for the Cuban economy, with the USSR alone

[2] See this author's article, "Castro's Revolution, Cuban Communist Appeals, and the Soviet Response," *World Politics* (Princeton), October 1968, pp. 39–68.

[3] See Andres Suarez, *Cuba: Castroism and Communism, 1959–1966*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1967, pp. 171–78.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

absorbing more than $1.1 billion in Cuban trade deficits between 1961–67.[4]

Castro's consolidation and expansion of revolutionary power at home and abroad was helped along by a number of objectively favorable circumstances. Internally, the promotion of a radical social revolution was greatly facilitated by the prerevolutionary accumulation of wealth, which was partially redistributed by the regime during its first years in power. Even after these assets began to be exhausted, the regime was able to maintain and expand other popular and egalitarian aspects of the social revolution without sacrificing Castro's developmental goals. Opportunities for upward mobility were made available to the lower class and especially to the youth. Full and stable employment was achieved for a labor force which had averaged over 16 percent annual unemployment prior to 1959. Wage and salary differentials were greatly reduced. Free or low-cost medical, public health and public utility services were extended to the rural as well as the urban population. Public education was rapidly expanded, resulting in a 66-percent increase in student enrollment between 1961–67; by the latter year over 25 percent of the total population was going to school. These social benefits, along with the psychic support generated by revolutionary symbols, contributed to the regime's continued popular legitimacy during the lean years that followed the redistributive phase of the Revolution.[5]

Externally, Castro's leverage with the Soviet Union was greatly dependent upon his hemispheric influence and the vitality of the continental revolution. After the missile crisis, the resurgence of Fidelista armed activity in Venezuela and the emergence of similar guerrilla activities in Peru, Colombia and Guatemala reduced Cuba's isolation and strengthened Fidel's bargaining position with Moscow. The increase in insurgency, the support given to the revolutionary movements by Havana, and the resulting tension between the Fidelistas and Latin American Communists in effect compelled Moscow to come to terms with Cuba in order to avoid losing influence over guerrilla activities in Latin America. Thus, between 1963 and 1966, the Soviets not only granted political and economic concessions to Castro, but they also gave qualified endorsement to his strategy of armed struggle and temporarily evinced greater interest in Latin America's revolutionary potential.[6] The continued viability of the Fidelista movement, therefore, provided Castro with a key instrument for overcoming Cuba's isolation both in the Western hemisphere and in the socialist camp.

Beginning in 1966, however, the regime was faced with new problems and conditions that taxed Fidel's style of leadership. At home, the regime embarked upon a new stage of accelerated economic development, while confronting growing discontent among the populace. And abroad it faced the prospects of new isolation as a result of developments within the socialist camp and the hemisphere.

Domestic Problems after 1965

During 1963–64, Castro had redefined his economic policy to put new stress on an agro-industrial strategy of development aimed at the rapid expansion, modernization and diversification of agriculture and livestock production. Planned increases in sugar production were expected to provide Cuba's main source of foreign exchange earnings, and the expanded agrarian sector was to serve as the basis for the island's later industrialization. Starting in 1966, the regime moved to accelerate this process by allocating additional capital, technology and manpower to development programs that necessarily entailed a delayed pay-off, and by restricting personal consumption for the time being. In the next few years an increasingly higher share of Cuba's gross disposable material product was thus devoted to total investments—24.4 percent in 1966, 27.1 percent in 1967, and 31.0 percent in 1968.[7] At the same time, the regime placed renewed em-

[4] Based on trade figures in Direccion Central de Estadistica, Junta Central de Planificacion, *Boletin Estadistico de 1966*, Havana, p. 125; and information obtained by the author in Havana in 1968.

[5] On this subject see Maurice Zeitlin, *Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class*, Princeton University Press, 1967, esp. Ch. 11. On the regime's efforts to inculcate revolutionary values in society, see Richard R. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba*, Stanford University Press, 1969; and Jaime Suchlicki, *University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920–1968*, Coral Gables, University of Miami Press, 1969, Chs. 5 and 6.

[6] For example, see A. Sivolobov, "Krestianskoe dvizhenie v Latinskoi Amerike," *Kommunist*, August 1964, pp. 100–07. At the Havana conference of November 1964, called to reconcile differences between the Cubans, Soviets and Latin American Communists, the latter two conceded that active support should be given to the insurgencies in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Haiti.

[7] For investment data, see Table II and Castro's speech of March 13, 1968, in *Granma*, March 24, p. 6. All references to *Granma* are to the weekly English edition unless otherwise noted.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

phasis on "moral incentives" instead of material rewards as the stimuli for the labor force in the new developmental struggle. This policy was justified on the ground that it would help to create "Communist" consciousness, but it was also necessitated by the regime's developmental priorities and the resulting shortages in consumer goods.

The new tempo of development was reflected in the clearing of scrub lands, producing a total of 4,000,000 hectares of land under cultivation by 1968, devoted principally to sugar cane, rice, citrus fruits and coffee.[8] A comprehensive road-building program was launched, calling for a threefold increase in the island's paved road system, and rapid progress was also made on an ambitious water conservation program.[9] The use of fertilizers increased nearly tenfold during 1963–68, and domestic production was to be further augmented by the completion of two new nitrogen fertilizer plants.[10] The mechanization of agriculture proceeded rapidly: some 42,000 tractors were imported during 1960–68, representing a fivefold increase over the 8,200 in operation in 1958.[11] The addition of new tandems to sugar mills, the widespread introduction of artificial inseminators in the cattle industry, and the establishment of agrarian research centers were further steps taken toward the modernization of the agrarian sector.

[8] See Castro's speech, *ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1969, p. 3.
[9] By the end of 1968 there were 15 large and nine smaller dams, plus numerous irrigation and drainage systems under construction: *ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1968, p. 8.
[10] See a report by Carlos Rafael Rodriguez to the 10th Regional Conference of the FAO, *ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1968, p. 4.
[11] See Castro's speech, Jan. 2, 1969, *ibid.*, Jan. 5, p. 4.

As Table I indicates, the Cuban economy showed a few striking improvements in production by 1966–67. However, these advances were atypical. Table II suggests that despite the high level of investments, the large import surpluses from the USSR, and the consumption squeeze after 1965, the overall record of production between 1962 and 1967 was at best erratic. Worse still, the success of the agro-industrial strategy was undermined by Cuba's chronic inability to meet annual sugar production targets (see Table III). Finally, total agricultural output—reflecting the performance of the sugar industry—oscillated from year to year, but declined overall by 19 percent between 1961 and 1968, while per capita production suffered an even sharper decrease of 29 percent over the same period (Table IV).

In part these results could be attributed to the time lag that was inevitable before Cuba's developmental investments could register increases in production. But other factors also contributed to the regime's economic problems. Adverse weather conditions in the middle-1960's damaged crops and lowered agricultural output. Also, there was an extraordinarily high rate of capital depreciation during the early years of the US economic embargo, helping to depress production. For all these reasons —not to mention deficiencies in planning and management—the economy remained sluggish, and there was little expectation of improvement until the early 1970's.

Meantime, the Cuban consumer was faced with increasing austerity. Whereas per capita personal consumption had risen by 7 percent between 1962 and 1965, it dropped sharply by 10 percent between 1965 and 1967 (see Table II). This downward

TABLE I

Selected Production Advances

	1962	1965	1966	1967	1968
Beef	196,392	309,985	326,379	324,176	369,352
Milk	219,414	243,198	329,505	324,120	302,102
Eggs	174,604	920,267	1,019,868	1,177,607	1,193,379
Fish	35,493	40,282	43,215	62,881	62,834

NOTE: The figures for beef production represent state procurement totals expressed in metric tons. Other figures are official reports of production, expressed in thousands of liters for milk; thousands of units for eggs; and metric tons for fish.

SOURCES: Direccion Central de Estadistica, Junta Central de Planificacion, *Boletin Estadistico de 1966*, Havana; and *Compendio Estadistico de Cuba 1968*, Havana.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TABLE II

Production, Investment and Consumption

(In millions of 1965 pesos* or percentages, as noted)

	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
Gross Material Product (GMP)	3,698	3,737	4,075	4,137	3,986	3,900
Gross Disposable Material Product (GDMP)	3,793	4,030	4,497	4,309	4,294	4,335
State Investments (SI)	608	717	795	827	910	979
Total Investments (TI)	885	981	1,228	947	1,048	1,175
Percent of GDMP devoted to SI	16.0	17.8	17.7	19.2	21.2	22.6
Percent of GDMP devoted to TI	23.3	24.3	27.3	21.2	24.4	27.1
Per Capita Personal Consumption	352	367	374	378	355	338

NOTE: GMP is the Cuban "Producto Bruto." GDMP is GMP, plus imports, less exports. TI is GDMP less total consumption. The abnormally high figure for TI in 1964 reflects an abnormally high rate of inventory accumulation.

SOURCES: The 1962–66 figures are based on data in *Boletin Estadistico de 1966*, p. 20 (see source note, Table I). The 1967 figures are estimates computed on the basis of data contained in Fidel Castro's speech of March 13, 1968, published in *Granma* (Havana), March 24, p. 6.

* One 1965 peso = one US dollar at the official exchange rate.

trend appears to have continued through 1968 as new shortages in consumer staples required the addition of new items to the ration list. The introduction of workers' mess halls serving low-priced meals, free local telephone calls, and nominal urban bus fares did little to mitigate the new austerity. Growing deprivation, coupled with the absence of visible production advances, contributed to the increased demoralization and disaffection evident among elements of Cuban society after 1967.

In a major speech of March 13, 1968, Fidel acknowledged that there were signs of "protest," "discontent," "confusion" and "uneasiness" among sectors of the populace as a result of the new shortages.[12] The following September, he bitterly assailed acts of industrial sabotage that had been taking place throughout the island, the hippie movement among some of Havana's youth (who had been forcibly rounded up the previous month), and incidents of vandalism in the schools of the capital.[13] Discontent was no longer confined to the so-called *gusanos* (worms) among the remnants of the middle class, but appeared to have spread to workers and even some sectors of Cuba's relatively privileged youth.[14]

By no means did the degree of discontent endanger the security of the regime. But it did threaten the vitality of the economy by making it more difficult to obtain maximum effort from the labor force. Absenteeism increased and productivity fell, once the workers found that they could not spend their wages on non-existent commodities.[15] Thus the regime's reliance on "moral incentives" or revolutionary exhortation proved insufficient to mobilize the labor force on a sustained

[12] *Granma*, March 24, 1968, p. 2.
[13] *Ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1969.

[14] My own 1968 stay in Cuba contrasted sharply with my previous year's visit: I found a heightened sense of demoralization and outright alienation among many individuals who had previously been identified with the Revolution. Rene Dumont, a close follower of Cuban developments, also observed growing popular disaffection during his visit in 1969. See his *Cuba: est-il socialiste?*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1970.

[15] In a study of absenteeism, the Cuban Communist Party's Commission on Revolutionary Orientation reported: "There is more money in circulation than things on which to spend it. Every worker knows that he can live on what he is paid for working 15 or 20 days a month." *Granma*, Nov. 9, 1969, p. 2.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

basis. At the same time, developmental priorities and the shortage of consumer goods precluded the return to material incentives.

External Problems: 1965-68

On the foreign front, four developments after 1965 increased Cuba's isolation and lessened her external leverage. First, seeing the futility of armed struggle, the Soviets and Latin American Communists moved to disassociate themselves from the insurgent guerrilla movements on the continent in order to work with established Latin American governments.[16] Between 1965 and 1968 the Soviets pushed for the normalization of diplomatic and trade relations with anti-Castro governments in Chile, Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela, even though the latter two were targets of guerrilla activity. Castro considered Moscow's moves a blatant betrayal of revolutionary internationalism and a sacrifice of Cuba's interests. In an address of August 10, 1967, to the first conference of the Latin American Solidarity Organization (OLAS), Fidel acidly declared that ". . . if internationalism exists, if solidarity is a word worthy of respect, the least that we can expect of any state of the socialist camp is that it refrain from giving any financial or technical aid to those regimes." [17] The scuttling of the Fidelista insurgent forces by local Communist parties similarly incensed Havana. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Venezuela. There, the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV) took steps to disengage itself from the guerrilla forces from April 1965 onward, leading eventually to Castro's violent denunciation of, and open break with, the PCV on March 13, 1967.[18]

The second development disturbing to Havana was the course of the war in Vietnam, which increased Castro's doubts about the genuineness of the Soviet commitment to Communist solidarity. Moscow had not deterred "imperialist aggression" nor actively responded to the US bombing of a bona fide Communist state, as called for by the Cuban leadership.[19] Together with the Soviet failure to assist the Arab states in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the Kosygin-Johnson talks at Glassboro, the Vietnam war reinforced the fears of the Cuban

[16] This reassessment of the Latin American situation was given impetus by the US intervention in the Dominican revolt. Thereafter, Moscow and the Communists argued for the avoidance of provocative and premature actions and for the formation of broad anti-imperialist fronts. This prescription was the main theme of the *World Marxist Review* (Toronto), August 1965.

TABLE III

Sugar Production

(In thousands of metric tons)

	Target	Harvest
1962	--	4,815
1963	--	3,882
1964	--	4,474
1965	6,000	6,156
1966	6,500	4,537
1967	7,500	6,236
1968	8,000	5,164
1969	9,000	4,459

SOURCES: *Hoy* Oct. 14, 1964; and Fidel Castro's address of May 20, 1970, in *Granma* May 31, p. 7.

TABLE IV

Agricultural Production

(1952–1956 = 100)

	Total	Per Capita
1961	122	106
1962	100	85
1963	86	71
1964	94	76
1965	113	89
1966	94	72
1967	115	87
1968	103	77

SOURCES: Based on Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, *Monthly Bulletin of Agricultural Economics and Statistics* (Rome), July–August 1969, pp. 17, 19.

[17] *Granma*, Aug. 20, 1967, p. 5.

[18] On the Venezuelan affair, see D. Bruce Jackson, *Castro, The Kremlin, and Communism in Latin America*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, pp. 40–119.

[19] Armando Hart, head of the Cuban delegation to the 23rd CPSU Congress in 1966, expressed Havana's view in a statement declaring that the socialist states had "the right and the duty" to hurl back the US "aggressors." He quoted Castro's speech of March 13, 1965, demanding armed intervention in Vietnam "'whatever the risks that are necessary.'" Reported in *Cuba Socialista* (Havana), May 1966, pp. 38–39.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

regime that Moscow was capable of sacrificing its allies.

The third reversal underscoring Cuba's vulnerability was the clear demise of the Fidelista insurgent forces in Venezuela, Peru and Colombia after mid-1965. The moribund continental revolution confronted Havana with the prospect of losing not only its supportive movement in the hemisphere, but also its principal source of international leverage. To arrest this development, the Cubans attempted to reconstitute and transform the revolutionary movement. First, they provided support for a new guerrilla *foco*, established in Bolivia by Ernesto Che Guevara in late 1966, with a force that included seven former members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. Next, Havana injected new content into the doctrine of guerrilla war through the publication in early 1967 of Régis Debray's book, *Revolution in the Revolution*. The Cubans' final step was to provide the continental revolution with an institutional base by convening the aforementioned conference of the Latin American Solidarity Organization in August 1967. Attended by some 160 Latin American delegates in Havana, the OLAS conference broke decisively with Moscow's line on peaceful revolution and established a permanent Executive Committee to promote armed revolutionary struggle.

The final and most traumatic setback for Havana was Guevara's capture and execution in October 1967, ending the Bolivian guerrilla *foco*. The Bolivian fiasco signaled the bankruptcy of Fidel's policy of continental revolution. With Che dead, Havana was left with a bureaucratic appendage in OLAS, but without much hope of attracting new revolutionaries. Without a viable revolutionary movement in the hemisphere, the Castro regime was deprived of its principal external resource in dealing with Moscow—at a time when Cuban-Soviet relations had become increasingly strained. Indeed, Soviet retaliation against Havana's insubordination was not long in coming. On January 2, 1968, Castro announced the immediate rationing of gasoline because of the "limited" possibility of the Soviet Union meeting Cuba's growing fuel consumption needs.[20] Fidel thus needed to find new counters to Soviet pressures, and to restructure Cuba's relationship with Moscow and the hemisphere, just when domestic problems were becoming more pressing.

Recovering Momentum: 1968-70

Following Guevara's death, Havana's attention was redirected inward towards the revitalization of revolutionary élan and the waging of the development struggle. Castro's speeches throughout 1968 and 1969 were virtually devoid of references to the continental revolution, concentrating instead on domestic political and economic issues. While the themes of Che's guerrilla struggle and sacrifice and the war in Vietnam were sounded, they were used mainly for inspirational purposes in mobilizing the populace toward greater productive efforts. Havana's reorientation was highlighted in the 1968 centennial celebration of Cuba's quest for independence, with Castro's revolution portrayed as an integral part of "One Hundred Years of Struggle" from 1868 to 1968. Having focused inwards, the regime sought to regain revolutionary momentum through (a) a return to ideological militancy, (b) new emphasis on the commitment to a 10-million-ton sugar harvest, and (c) militarization of the Castroite Revolution.

The regime's new phase of ideological fervor began with a "revolutionary offensive" launched in March 1968. Puritanical in intent, it aimed at accelerating the construction of "real communism" by eradicating capitalism and residual bourgeois

The Persistence of "Capitalism"

Are we going to construct socialism, or are we going to construct vending stands? . . . . Gentleman, we did not make a Revolution here to establish the right to trade! . . . . Whoever says that capitalism is easily deterred is a liar; capitalism has to be dug out by the roots. . . .

. . . we had thought it would be possible to reduce the number of businesses little by little. . . . But what actually happened? Businesses did not disappear; they increased in number. Almost half of the businesses came into being after the Revolution. . . . But little by little we are sanitizing our environment, cleaning it up, creating a country that is really a country of workers.

—Fidel Castro, speeches of March 13 and March 15, 1968, in Granma (Havana), March 24, 1968.

[20] *Granma* (daily), Jan. 3, 1968, p. 3.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vices from Cuban society. In his aforementioned speech of March 13, 1968, Castro stressed that revolution would not be an "easy road" gilded by Soviet assistance, and called upon the Cuban people to display "everyday heroism" by accepting necessary deprivations. Declaring that there could be no "accommodation" with capitalism in the new society, he announced that the remaining private nonagrarian sector was to be abolished immediately because of profiteering and blackmarket activities by "anti-social" elements. In short, "capitalism," "parasitism," and the "exploitation of man" were to be "dug out by the roots" in creating Cuba's Communist society.[21]

By the end of March, 55,600 small, privately-owned retail, service and manufacturing establishments were nationalized, giving Cuba the distinction of having the highest ratio of state to private ownership of any Communist country in the world.[22] The immediate effect of this measure, however, was to aggravate discontent, partly as a result of new bottlenecks in the distribution of goods and services previously supplied by the private sector.

Nevertheless, the renewed emphasis upon ideological militancy continued. In the fall of 1968, the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR) spearheaded a drive against "bourgeois" intellectuals and antirevolutionary literature, insisting that there must be no "ideological softening" in the revolutionary movement.[23] At the end of March 1969, a "National Forum on Internal Order" was convened to examine the problem of "antisocial behavior." Attended by representatives of the party, MINFAR, the Ministry of Interior, and various mass organizations, the forum discussed measures to rekindle revolutionary zeal in the populace and to cope with such problems as the rising rate of juvenile delinquency and crimes against property.[24]

In the meantime, Castro had launched an effort to mobilize popular attention and energy by making a national crusade out of the commitment to produce 10 million tons of sugar by 1970. This enormous goal had first been announced in the fall of 1964 as the final target in a five-year production plan for 1965–70.[25] From 1965 to 1967, it got little mention in official pronouncements and propaganda —partly, no doubt, because sugar production failed to meet the planned levels, and also because the regime's major interest of the moment was the continental revolution. Very shortly after the Bolivian fiasco, however, Fidel suddenly began to emphasize the 1970 sugar target in terms that made its achievement both a matter of national honor and a test of Castroism itself.[26]

It is interesting to consider what must have gone through Castro's mind as he embarked upon this course. Certainly, if such a stupendous harvest could be achieved, it would represent a stunning comeback for Havana, counterbalancing the collapse of the continental revolution and the spasmodic past performance of the Cuban economy. Moreover, it would make Cuba dominant in the world sugar market at the time the 1964 Soviet-Cuban trade treaty was due to expire, thereby offering Havana the possibility of turning to the West as a market for sugar sales. At the same time, there were high risks involved in Castro's gamble; while a successful harvest might yield great psychological, political and economic pay-offs, a poor harvest would undeniably demoralize the population and further damage Havana's credibility.

In short, the harvest posed a number of decisive tests for the regime. At stake was the superiority of the new over the old order, for Fidel proposed to better the previous record of sugar production set in 1952—7.29 million tons (in 110 days)—by nearly 40 percent (in a much longer harvest period of over 280 days). At stake also was Cuba's international credit position among socialist and capitalist trading partners, since a successful harvest would naturally strengthen their confidence in the Cuban economy. But most important, the 10-million-ton goal was a test of Castro's charisma and radical style of leadership. Fidel sought to revive the revolutionary commitment of the populace by accomplishing what had never been done in Cuba's history.

Standing in the way of this maximum goal were

[21] *Ibid.*, March 24, 1968, pp. 2–8.

[22] Only the agrarian sector remained partly outside the area of state ownership, with 30 percent of the land still in private hands. See Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "The Revolutionary Offensive," *Transaction* (St. Louis), April 1969, pp. 22–29, 62.

[23] Attacks against deviant intellectuals were published in *Verde Olivo* (Havana), the MINFAR's official weekly, in five successive issues beginning Nov. 3, 1968.

[24] See *Granma*, April 6, 1969, pp. 4–5.

[25] See *Hoy* (Havana), Oct. 14, 1964.

[26] See, for example, Castro's speeches of Dec. 24, 1967, and Jan. 2, 1968 (reported by Havana Radio on those dates), and especially his speech of March 13, 1968, in *Granma*, March 24, pp. 2–8.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such "objective" conditions as the limited production capacity of the sugar mills, the unpredictability of weather conditions, the inadequacies in transportation facilities, and the low productivity of the non-professional cane-cutting force.[27] One way Fidel sought to overcome these obstacles was to rely on "subjectivism," or the "Sierra Maestra complex." In the same manner that his small guerrilla force had defeated Batista's army, the work force, by its revolutionary will, determination and effort, would collectively triumph over all obstacles standing in the way of bringing in the harvest. Mobilizing several hundred thousand volunteers, Castro made the harvest a "historic battle," a test of character for the Cuban people.[28]

Castro did not depend on "subjectivism" alone, however; soon after the all-out harvesting effort was announced, the regime took steps leading to the increasing militarization of the economy. Beginning in 1968, the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) became a developmental weapon funneling supervisory personnel and manpower into the economy and organizing part of the labor force along paramilitary lines. These steps helped compensate for the dearth of competent civilian managers and technicians in the field by supplying army officers with command and organizational skills, as well as relatively high levels of technical competence.[29] The army also helped to overcome organizational deficiencies in the party which, to use Castro's term, had impeded the waging of "simultaneous battles" on several economic fronts.[30] In addition, the militarization of the labor force was aimed at inculcating the work discipline necessary for realizing production targets.[31]

Beginning in 1968, therefore, army officers could be found in crucial positions at the provincial and regional levels of the sugar industry. The two most important sugar-producing provinces of Oriente and Camaguey were under army command, while junior officers assumed management of the most important sugar *centrales*, especially those undergoing conversion into super-mills. The provincial command posts reportedly were linked in turn with headquarters in Havana. In addition, the labor force was increasingly organized along military lines in the form of columns, batallions and brigades—including a 40,000-man Centennial Youth Column in Camaguey, in which youths served to fulfill their military obligation. Finally, the army's mechanized "Che Guevara" Brigade was directly employed in clearing away scrub lands for agricultural development.

The growing reliance on the FAR as a developmental weapon and organizational model continued throughout 1969 in preparation for the 1970 harvest. In March 1969 Castro stressed the use of the army in solving production problems in Camaguey province.[32] In October Armando Hart, party Organization Secretary, extolled the example of the army in agricultural work, stressing that the production rate of the FAR labor brigades exceeded that of other agricultural workers.[33] In November Fidel fully acknowledged the increasing significance of the FAR. He announced that between 80,000 and 100,000 armed forces personnel would be mobilized for the 1970 harvest. Referring to the need for "discipline and good work habits" in the labor force, he called upon the FAR to provide the necessary direction:

The armed forces represent . . . the institution with the most experience in organization; they are the ones with the most discipline. They must contribute that spirit of organization and discipline . . . as well as their experience.[34]

In Castro's bid to regain revolutionary momentum, the 10-million ton target provided Cuban society with an all-consuming goal, while the militarization of the revolution became the organizational means for attaining that objective. The future of the militarized model, in turn, depended upon the success of the 1970 harvest.

Well before the harvest was in, it was clear from

[27] For example, unforeseen delays and problems made it impossible to achieve planned increases in the production capacity of sugar mills undergoing plant expansion. Acknowledging "complications and difficulties on Feb. 9, 1970, Castro concluded that "the new equipment for the 1970 harvest, rather than helping the harvest, turned out to be something of an obstacle to it." *Ibid.*, Feb. 15, 1970, p. 2.

[28] For examples of his ongoing theme, see Castro's speeches in *ibid.*, Nov. 2 and Nov. 16, 1969, and Feb. 15, 1970.

[29] On March 13, 1969, Castro pointed out that thousands of work centers were being administered by persons with limited education: *ibid.*, March 16, 1969, pp. 2–4. At the time, the Communist Party of Cuba probably did not exceed 60,000 members, whose low level of technical competence and lack of organizational abilities further undermined the regime's developmental efforts. See Armando Hart's revealing speech, *ibid.*, May 25, 1969, pp. 3–5.

[30] See Castro's admonitions in *ibid.*, March 16, 1969, p. 5.

[31] See Castro's address of Nov. 4, 1969, *ibid.*, Nov. 16, p. 3.

[32] *Ibid.*, (daily), March 20, 1969, p. 2.

[33] *Ibid.*, Oct. 5, 1969, pp. 4–6.

[34] *Ibid.*, Nov. 16, 1969, pp. 2–4.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Havana's own reports that the Cubans would not manage to reach their 10-million-ton target, but that they would succeed in producing a new record harvest of 8.5 million tons.[35] On balance, this performance represents a setback for Castro (on which more shortly). But the position of the FAR and the attractiveness of the militarized model may have been enhanced, since they appear to have been decisive in setting the new record of production. As will be seen, such a development could hold crucial significance for the future of the Cuban Revolution.

Relations with Moscow

The recovery of domestic revolutionary momentum was paralleled by bold efforts on Castro's part to exact a firmer Soviet commitment to Havana. Deprived of his hemispheric leverage following Che's death, Fidel severely strained Cuba's relationship with Moscow throughout most of 1968 in an effort to force a new understanding with the Soviets. This phase of political maneuvering, which was characterized by mutual retaliations, came to an end with Fidel's speech on the Soviet bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Thereafter, a new compromise emerged which has since produced closer bonds between the two countries, but which also has left Cuba precariously dependent upon Moscow.

To review these developments, the pattern of strained relations was set in late 1967 when Havana substituted Minister of Public Health Major Jose R. Machado for President Osvaldo Dorticos in Cuba's delegation to Moscow's 50th-anniversary celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution. This slight was followed by the "microfaction" affair involving the old Stalinist, Anibal Escalante, former Executive Secretary of the defunct pro-Soviet Popular Socialist Party (PSP). In January 1968, Escalante and 34 other ex-PSP members were arrested, tried and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 2 to 15 years; the principal charges leveled against them were that they had operated as a so-called "microfaction" to oppose Castro's economic and foreign policies, and that through Soviet, East German and Czech contacts they had urged the withdrawal of Soviet-bloc support in order to bring about Castro's downfall and replacement by trusted old-line Communists. Responsible authorities of the Soviet and East European countries were exempted from blame for the subversive activities of the "microfaction." Nevertheless, the arrest and sentencing of this pro-Soviet faction was apparently intended to serve as a clear warning to Moscow: Havana would oppose increased Soviet influence in Cuba's affairs and stood ready to retaliate against cutbacks in Soviet assistance by carrying out further actions embarrassing to Moscow.[36]

The Escalante affair, along with Havana's boycott of the Soviet-sponsored meeting of Communist parties in Bucharest in February, came at a time of hard bargaining between Cuba and the USSR over the 1968 trade protocol. Negotiations had been going on since the preceding October, with the protocol finally signed on March 22. The new protocol did in fact reflect a tightening up of Soviet economic assistance: reportedly, the volume of trade in 1968 was to increase by only 10 percent as opposed to 23 percent in 1967; and the Soviets henceforth were to charge an undisclosed rate of interest on new credits extended to Cuba.[37] Given the poor 1968 sugar harvest of 5.2 million tons, the Soviets seemed to have a stranglehold on the Cuban regime, against which further countermoves by Havana would be futile if not hazardous for the Cuban economy.

The Soviet-bloc intervention in Czechoslovakia, however, gave Castro the opportunity to air Cuban grievances and to demand a redefinition of Soviet-Cuban ties—in exchange for his endorsement of the occupation. In a speech of August 23, 1968, Castro vented Havana's displeasure over Soviet-bloc internal developments and relations with Cuba: both the bureaucratic Novotny and the revisionist Dubcek had corrupted Communist ideals; and the poor quality and onerous terms of Czechoslovak aid to Cuba had violated the spirit of internationalism. Next, he both condemned and approved the Warsaw Pact occupation: it was a "flagrant" violation of Czechoslovakia's sovereignty and thus

[35] Castro's speech of May 19, 1970, in *ibid.*, May 31, p. 4.

[36] See the attacks against the "microfaction" by Raul Castro and others, *ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1968, pp. 2, 4–5, 7–11. The affair was also directed against "reformist" currents within the Revolution. See Castro's speech of March 13, *ibid.*, March 24, 1968, p. 2.

[37] Kevlin Devlin, "The Soviet-Cuban Confrontation: Economic Reality and Political Judo," from the Research Department of Radio Free Europe, April 1, 1968, pp. 15–16.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

illegal; but it was justifiable politically because "Czechoslovakia was moving toward a counter-revolutionary situation . . . and into the arms of imperialism . . . [and] it was absolutely necessary, at all costs, in one way or another, to prevent this from eventually taking place." Castro thus based his argument for Soviet intervention on ideological rather than geopolitical grounds. Accordingly, he demanded that the same Soviet-bloc protection be extended to North Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba: ". . . will they send the divisions of the Warsaw Pact to Cuba if the Yankee imperialists attack—or even threaten to attack—our country, if we request it?" [38]

Castro's speech on the Czech crisis appears to have been a major turning point in Cuban-Soviet affairs. Earlier tension gave way to a rapprochement by 1969, marked by mutual concessions and new bonds of solidarity between the two countries. In early 1969 and 1970, the Soviets signed trade protocols with Havana that evidently were satisfactory to the Cubans. For the first time a Soviet naval flotilla visited Cuba in 1969 on the occasion of the July 26th anniversary (an important one in the Castroite calendar, marking Fidel's first major strike against Batista). In November a group of 650 Soviet technicians and diplomats, headed by the Soviet ambassador, spent a day cutting sugar cane as a gesture of solidarity with the Cubans. Marshal Grechko, the Soviet Minister of Defense, visited Havana in the same month, stirring speculation of a new Soviet arms agreement with Cuba.[39] Castro thus appears to have been successful in strengthening Soviet-Cuban ties as a means of overcoming Cuba's isolation.

For its part, Havana seems to have swung back into line behind Moscow since 1968, fully endorsing the Soviet Union's domestic and foreign policies. The Cubans have also ceased their polemical attacks on the pro-Soviet Latin American Communist parties, and have backed off from their promotion of the strategy of armed struggle.[40] Finally, Havana has moderated its policy toward Latin America in a further effort to reduce Cuba's hemispheric isolation. A trade agreement with Chile was signed early in 1970, and Fidel has praised the nationalist and reformist posture of the Peruvian military regime on several occasions since its rise to power on July 14, 1969.

These shifts in the Cuban line were no more evident than in Castro's speech of April 22, 1970, honoring Lenin's birth. Fidel paid tribute to the Soviet state, without which ". . . it would have been impossible for Cuba to become the first socialist country in Latin America." He attacked the leftist critics of the Soviet Union in Europe and Latin America for having condemned Soviet-bloc intervention in Czechoslovakia. He further praised the Soviet Union for its supportive role against "imperialist aggression" in Vietnam, the Middle East and Cuba, noting that his regime alone had received $1.5 billion in Soviet arms. Concerning Latin America, he vowed that Cuba had not and would not give up her support for the revolutionary movement. But in an apparent reference to the Peruvian example, he added:

> **. . . [Cuban] support does not necessarily have to be expressed exclusively in favor of guerrilla movements, but [can be extended to] any government which sincerely adopts a policy of economic and social development and of liberating its country from the Yankee imperialist yoke; no matter by what path that government has reached power, Cuba will support it.**[41]

The recent Cuban-Soviet reconciliation marks a significant departure from Castro's earlier political approach to Moscow. To be sure, the accommodation was reached only after hard bargaining; but in contrast to the past, it was an extraneous factor—the Czech crisis—that gave Fidel the singular opportunity to press for a trade-off. Otherwise Castro would have had little to bargain with. His stance on armed struggle has lost a good deal of its significance since the collapse of the revolutionary movement on the Latin American continent. Moreover, Moscow's position has been strengthened by the Cuban economy's continuing need for maximum Soviet assistance, and particularly by the fact that the 1964 trade pact is due to lapse at the end of 1970. Hence, Cuba has been placed in a position of critical dependency, leaving Fidel with little room to maneuver. One way remains for Castro to regain leverage, and that is to explore new alternatives for Cuba in her policy vis-à-vis the Western hemisphere.

[38] *Granma,* Aug 25, 1968, pp. 1–4.

[39] Raul Castro paid a six-week return visit to the Soviet Union in April–May 1970. According to one report, the Soviets agreed to re-equip the FAR, supplying it, *inter alia,* with improved SA–2 air defense missiles and a 25-plane squadron of F-model MIG–21's: *Time* (New York), July 27, 1970, p. 17.

[40] As a result, Douglas Bravo, commander of the Venezuelan Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), issued a communique on January 15, 1970, accusing the Castro leadership of abandoning the guerrilla movements.

[41] *Granma,* May 3, 1970, pp. 2–5.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Revolutionary Junctures and Prospects

The recent developments in Cuba's domestic and foreign policies pose critical issues which affect the character and direction of the Cuban Revolution. Internally, the issue is whether charisma, radicalism and the resultant popular basis of the Revolution can be reconciled with the organizational imperatives of sustained economic development. Externally, the issue is whether Cuba can overcome her hemispheric isolation and reduce her dependency upon the Soviet Union by coming to terms with Latin American governments.

Fidel's charisma and revolutionary style appear to have become less relevant to the new development process. The commitment to the 10-million-ton harvest was the product of Fidel's radicalism, reflecting his personal decision-making authority and his emphasis on subjectivism as the motive force. But his revolutionary style probably did no more than supply the necessary inspirational force for the 1970 harvest. It was the new reliance on the armed forces as a developmental force, and on the militarized model of production, that evidently provided the needed institutional support and organization for the collective effort. At issue, therefore, is whether the regime can reconcile the func-

The Many Voices of Castro

On Soviet Solidarity

In my opinion, this "we are defended" . . . attitude led to a certain sit-back-and-take-it-easy mentality when the only correct, the only intelligent, the only truly revolutionary attitude was always to depend on ourselves . . . to rely first on ourselves and only on ourselves, and always be ready to place a high price on our lives without waiting for anyone to come and defend us.—*(March 13, 1968.)*

We shall never break our political ties with the Soviet Union or even what they call military ties. On the contrary! As far as we are concerned, we'll always be ready to increase our military ties with the Soviet Union. —*(April 22, 1970.)*

On the Revolutionary Movement

The guerrilla is bound to be the nucleus of the revolutionary movement. . . . We are absolutely convinced that, in the long run, there is only one solution, as expressed in the [OLAS] Resolution: guerrilla warfare in Latin America.—*(August 10, 1967.)*

When we speak of supporting a revolutionary movement, we should say that that support does not necessarily have to be expressed exclusively in favor of guerrilla movements. . . . I say this because . . . no two cases in the history of the world are exactly alike, and there will not be two revolutions that will develop in the same way. New possibilities and new forms appear . . . [and] any Latin American government that sincerely and consistently undertakes the economic and social development of its country and its liberation from the imperialist yoke will be able to count on the support of our people and of our Revolution.—*(April 22, 1970.)*

On the Sugar Harvest

. . . it is not a matter of eight point something, or nine, but at least 10 million tons. And not a ton less, not one tone less, with or without a drought! And, if there's no drought, there's no telling how many tons we'll have!—*(April 19, 1968.)*

What this will mean from a political, moral and revolutionary point of view is undoubtedly worth much more than the ten million tons of sugar themselves. It will be a great ideological victory of the Revolution and the revolutionary camp in general. . . . It will be a great ideological and moral victory over imperialism, over the capitalists and reactionaries!—*(November 4, 1969.)*

We won't accept a pound less than ten million tons. That is our position, and we repeat and reaffirm it. It would be incredibly humiliating if we were to produce anything less than ten million tons.—*(February 9, 1970.)*

I can tell you that we won't reach the ten million ton mark. I'm not going to beat around the bush. That, in short, is the situation. . . . Now the struggle for the ten million tons must become the struggle for the nine million tons.—*(May 19, 1970.)*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions and prerogatives of charismatic leadership with the institutional structures and orderly processes which are needed to promote rapid economic growth.

While it should help to resolve immediate production problems, the militarized revolutionary model seems incompatible with the Cuban Revolution's earlier voluntarism and populism. Such a model involves a regimented command system directed from above. It would thus close off the possibilities of building responsive institutions that could provide for effective popular participation in influencing national policies.[42]

The choice before the regime is whether to push on with its accelerated developmental program under the militarized model or some other command system, or to opt for a more responsive system at the expense of some of its more radical goals. Ironically, however, even if the militarized path is chosen, Castro's presence and personal ties with the masses may be needed to make the new revolutionary order more palatable.

On the international front, Havana needs to overcome its isolation within the hemisphere both to gain a greater sense of security and to reduce dependency on the Soviets. Here, however, the regime may face a dilemma in choosing between Cuba's diplomatic and revolutionary interests. This is clearly illustrated by the Peruvian case. On the one hand, Castro has indicated that he is encouraged by recent Peruvian developments, and he may even be looking to the anti-Communist Peruvian military regime as a potential anchor in realigning right-wing and left-wing nationalism in Latin America.[43] On the other hand, any move by Cuba toward the establishment of relations with Peru (or any other country) would require that Havana associate itself with governments confronting insurgent groups and urban terrorists. In turn, this could cut Fidel off from whatever remains of the revolutionary Left, leaving him open to the charge of having abandoned the revolutionary struggle. Nevertheless, if assertive nationalistic tendencies continue to develop among non-Fidelista groups in Peru and elsewhere in Latin America, Havana may decide to foresake its revolutionary objectives in favor of Cuba's diplomatic interests. Such a step would signal a new direction for the Cuban Revolution.

POSTSCRIPT

The 1970 harvest ended with a record production of 8.526 million tons.[44] Nonetheless all indications are that it represents a major personal defeat for Castro, reflecting adversely on his credibility and radical style of leadership. Consequently, it may signify a watershed in Cuba's internal development in the same way that Guevara's death proved a turning point in Fidel's efforts to revolutionize the hemisphere.

In speeches of May 19 and 20, and most recently of July 26,[45] Castro acknowledged personal as well as collective "responsibility" for the harvest "setback" and "defeat." In the latter speech he also revealed a number of other reversals in the economy and gave a gloomy forecast of the continued hardship and supreme effort that lie ahead in Cuba's drive for economic development. Overall, he called for the strengthening of the Communist Party apparatus and mass organizations in an apparent effort to arrest demoralization in the populace, reverse the trend toward a slackening of work, and control dissenting elements within his regime. He further indicated that administrative reforms would be adopted to improve the coordination of economic activities and to remove party personnel from management functions at the plant level.

These and other steps suggest that Castro is under pressure from technocratic and reformist elements in Cuba. Supported by the Soviet Union, and bolstered by Fidel's defeat in the sugar harvest, they may be pressing for greater influence in the formulation of economic policies under a less personalized decision-making system.

---

[42] Maurice Zeitlin observes: "At present, despite the apparently ample participation of the workers in discussions and decisions concerning the *implementation* of the national economic plan set for their plant, the workers have no role . . . in determining the plan itself." He adds that little has been done ". . . to establish institutions to guarantee that competing points of view can be heard within the revolutionary socialist consensus; that meaningful alternatives are debated, that policies are initiated, as well as implemented, by the citizenry at large." "Inside Cuba: Workers and Revolution," *Ramparts* (San Francisco), March 1970, pp. 70, 74.

[43] The Cuban-Peruvian alignment might be facilitated by the trend toward left-wing militarization in Cuba. The two countries would share institutional, elite-generational and developmental similarities, as well as assertive nationalism, which would help overcome ideological differences between the two regimes.

[44] Havana Radio, July 25, 1970.

[45] *Granma*, May 31, 1970, pp. 2–5, 7–12; and Havana Radio, July 26, 1970.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Che in Bolivia:

The "Revolution" That Failed

By Robert F. Lamberg

Ernesto Guevara comes/from the country to the city/[with] a heart and a gun. . . .
—Bolivian guerrilla song.

[Our] isolation continues to be total . . . the peasant base is still undeveloped. . . . We still have not recruited any peasants, which is understandable considering the little contact we have had with them. . . .
—From Guevara's field diary, April and August 1967.

It is ironic—but not untypical of Fidel Castro's checkered course—that only a few months after he stage-managed a major demonstration of his influence on the Latin American continent (the conference of the "Latin American Solidarity Organization" convened in Havana in August 1967), the strategy of guerrilla warfare by which he and his followers hoped to achieve their revolutionary aims was emphatically and decisively repudiated —in the much celebrated misadventure of "Che" Guevara in Bolivia.

There are several reasons why it is important to examine the Bolivian guerrilla movement. First and foremost, it was the only insurgent force organized entirely on the basis of refinements in guerrilla theory that might be described as the third phase of the Castroite ideology.[1] Secondly, it was the only guerrilla action in Latin America that yielded a great deal of firsthand documentary

Mr. Lamberg is Visiting Professor for Latin American Contemporary History and Politics at the Centro de Estudios Internacionales at El Colegio de Mexico. He has written extensively on Latin American and Communist affairs and authored Die castristische Guerrilla in Lateinamerika, *to be published soon in West Germany.*

[1] In the writer's view, it is possible to distinguish three distinct phases in the evolution of Castroite ideology. In the first, theoretical notions were formulated *ex post facto* to explain and glorify Castro's successful revolution in Cuba; the classic expression of these theories was Guevara's famous volume, *Guerra de Guerrillas*, published in Havana in 1960. In the second phase, Castroism was elaborated and infused with doctrinal concepts that placed it unmistakably in the ideological orbit of communism (see, for example, the "Second Declaration of Havana," *Revolucion* (Havana) Feb. 5, 1962; Guevara's "Guerra de Guerrillas: Un Metodo," *Cuba Socialista*, September 1962; and other sources). The third phase witnessed the amendment of Guevara's theories of guerrilla warfare to emphasize the need for armed struggle by guerrillas operating independently from political control (reflecting Havana's impatience with the peaceful politics and tactics of the pro-Soviet Communist parties on the continent). The chief articulator of this last phase of ideology was the Frenchman Jules Régis Debray. See in particular his *Revolution in the Revolution*, New York, The Monthly Review Press, 1967.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

material, so that it can be analyzed with a minimum of speculation. In the third place, it provided a graphic and striking illustration of the distance between the revolutionary idealism of the Castroites and the practical realities of Latin American life.

In the latter respect, we shall start out by considering what Che Guevara apparently did not—the specific political, social and economic conditions that characterize the Bolivian nation.

A Society in Transition

Bolivia has been called "a beggar on a throne of gold"[2]—a reference to the unhappy fact that despite enormously rich natural resources the Bolivian economy is greatly underdeveloped and the country is plagued by poverty. Eighteen years ago these conditions helped to bring about a revolution which, in terms of the changes it wrought in Bolivia's political and economic system, ranks among the three most important revolutions in Latin America in this century (the other two being the Mexican in 1910 and the Cuban in 1959). Carried out by the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (hereafter MNR) under the leadership of Victor Paz Estenssoro, the revolution of 1952 was decidedly "socialistic" insofar as its original goals and programs were concerned. Among the significant measures that it undertook were the nationalization of the country's most important natural resource, the tin mines; an extensive program of land reform; and the introduction of universal suffrage. If, in later years, there was reason to doubt the success of these programs in terms of their economic impact, they did at least succeed in converting a significant segment of the population to the socio-political outlook they represented.[3]

In November 1964 the Paz regime was overthrown by a military faction within the ranks of the MNR, and a new government was formed under the leadership of Generals René Barrientos Ortuño and Alfredo Ovando Candia.[4] The announced aim of the new regime was to depoliticize public life and to institute decision-making based on technological expertise. In terms of power relations, the three most important forces in the country now became the military, the farmers and the mine workers.

For both political and economic reasons which do not need to be elaborated here, Barrientos and Candia concentrated their efforts on curtailing the power of the mine workers while seeking support from the major peasants' organizations. By 1966 the regime felt strong enough to seek popular affirmation of its leadership, and Barrientos was duly endorsed as President of Bolivia in national elections. Barrientos' success in establishing a power base in the peasants' organizations later proved to be an important political asset, as we shall see.

The Barrientos regime could hardly be called democratic (for that matter, neither could its predecessor). At the same time, it certainly was not "counterrevolutionary"—on the contrary, it aimed, in its own way and according to its own notions, at spurring the slow pace of progress toward the goals of the revolution. It might also be pointed out that Barrientos and his colleagues acted with relative restraint in dealing with their political opponents (at least compared to the behavior of some Latin American militarists who have seized power by force). It is true that the mine workers were subjected to a number of repressive measures, including the outlawing of their union organization and the exile of their most active leaders. But otherwise the regime seemed to act with deliberate moderation. The ousted leaders of the Paz regime were spared brutal physical persecution, and though Paz himself was exiled, his supporters were soon able to regroup and return to the political arena without serious harassment from the regime. Various leftist groups, including Communist factions, emerged as legal political organizations, and the pro-Soviet Communist Party of Bolivia (PCB) even took part —unsuccessfully—in the elections of 1966 by organizing the collective front FLN (*Frente de Liberación Nacional*). While it is impossible to gauge the genuineness of the support extended to Barrientos, it is at least clear that he was offered relatively weak opposition in the presidential election and emerged from it with enhanced strength and status.

To all appearances, Ernesto "Che" Guevara's plan to establish a guerrilla force in Bolivia originated some time in 1963, preceding the *coup* that brought Barientos to power.[5] It seems possible that

[2] Robert J. Alexander, *The Bolivian National Revolution*, New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1958, p. 3.

[3] On the 1952 revolution and its results, *cf.* Robert J. Alexander, *The Bolivian National Revolution*, New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1958; and Mario Rolon Anaya, *Politica y partidos en Bolivia*, La Paz, Editorial Juventud, 1966.

[4] On the Barrientos *coup* and its consequences, *cf.* William H. Brill, *Military Intervention in Bolivia: The Overthrow of Paz Estenssoro and the MNR*, Washington, D.C., Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, 1967.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he later considered other target areas (during the period of his much-publicized disappearance from the public scene in 1965-66) but in the end decided Bolivia offered the ripest ground for revolution. In any case, the observer cannot escape the impression that once "el Che" had embarked upon his course, he paid very little attention to the important shifts taking place on the Bolivian scene—an oversight that was to contribute significantly to his downfall.

A Theory of Revolution

To understand Guevara's course of action, it is necessary to know something about the revolutionary theory on which it was based. First formulated by Guevara in his book *Guerra de Guerrillas*—and elaborated over the years in the statements and writings of Castro, Guevara, and finally the Frenchman Jules Régis Debray—this theory departed from the traditional Marxist and Leninist views of the conditions necessary for revolution to propound the notion that a guerrilla force could serve as the "nucleus of armed insurrection"—or *foco insurreccional*—creating a revolutionary situation by its own momentum. According to Guevara, a small band of armed revolutionaries, by gaining popular support, could grow in numbers and strength to the point where it could defeat a national army. On the Latin American continent, the best locale for such an armed struggle was the countryside, where the guerrillas would have more mobility against enemy forces and would be less liable to exposure than in densely populated areas. More important, Guevara believed that the peasants—motivated by the desire to possess their own land and to crush the feudal agricultural structure—would join with the guerrillas in fighting the "oppressors"; thus he assigned the peasantry a key role in the revolutionary warfare that he envisioned would "liberate" the Latin American continent.

Guevara's theory was said to be based in part on lessons the Castroites had learned in the Cuban revolution of 1958-59. Both he and Castro, and later Debray, came to assert that the Cuban experience exemplified the successful creation of a revolutionary situation by a guerrilla force. Consequently, they preached that the Cuban revolution must be extended—or, to employ the usual term, exported—to other Latin American countries. They also became convinced that revolutionary action—that is, armed struggle—was the only possible way to achieve social change in Latin America. Finally—in defiance of the sacrosanct Leninist notion of party supremacy—they insisted that in the course of such armed struggle, the political element of the revolutionary forces (*i.e.*, the Communist Party) should be subordinated to the military element (*i.e.*, the guerrillas).

These, in brief, were the convictions that underlay Guevara's venture into Bolivia. His broad aim was to achieve an "internationalization" of the guerrilla force in a region reaching from the Peruvian and Bolivian highlands into his homeland, Argentina, and possibly including even southwestern Brazil and Paraguay. The Bolivian area was intended to serve as the center of the insurgency, providing both a training and a proving ground for the guerrilla troops. The whole guerrilla region was to become a "second Vietnam," as Guevara later described it in a manifesto to his followers issued in April 1967.[6]

Guevara seems to have been indifferent to certain early signs that his ambitions might be overreaching. For example, a small guerrilla force organized in Argentina in 1963 by Jorge Massetti, working in close collaboration with Guevara, initially played a part in the insurgents' plans, but it was annihilated by government troops in 1964. The previous year had witnessed the crushing of a peasants' uprising in upper Peru (Cuzco) led by the Trotskyite Hugo Blanco Galdos[7]; an effort was made in 1965 to supplant this rebel movement with a guerrilla band

[5] See Fidel Castro's introduction to *El Diaro del Che en Bolivia*, Mexico City, Siglo XXI Editores, 1968. See also the report of a special OAS commission entitled *Estudio del "Diario del Che Guevara en Bolivia,"* Washington, D.C., Pan American Union, Mimeographed document, Sed. L/X.II.23, Dec. 20, 1968.

[6] Ernesto Che Guevara, "Mensaje a la Tricontinental," in *Obra revolucionaria*, Mexico City, Ediciones ERA, SA 1967, pp. 640 ff. See also Castro's introduction to Guevara's diary, *loc. cit.*; Ricardo Rojo, *Che Guevara—Leben und Tod eines Freundes*, Frankfurt, S. Fisher Verlag, 1968, pp. 137 f., 176; Ted Cordova Claure, "Un Vietnam en Bolivie?" *Marcha* (Montevideo), May 19, 1967; and Richard Gott, "La experienca guerillera en Bolivia," *Estudios Internacionales* (Santiago), April-June 1968.

[7] Blanco's peasant movement was crushed in May 1963; in any case, it is unlikely that Blanco and Guevara would have been able to collaborate, since both showed strong ideological and psychological tendencies to go it alone. According to Guevara's diary and other sources, Havana tried to establish a new guerrilla force in Peru in 1966-67, following the destruction of the first Castroite unit. See "Mensaje al Che No. 37," in *Punto Final* (Santiago), July 30, 1968; Agence France Presse (AFP), report from Camiri, Nov. 14, 1967; and the entries in Guevara's diary for March 20 and 21, 1967, *loc. cit.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

loyal to Castro, but it, too, was destroyed within a few months.

Seemingly undaunted by these developments, Guevara proceeded with his plans to establish the Bolivian base. As part of the advance preparations, Jose Maria Martinez Tamayo (referred to in rebel writings as "Ricardo"), a Cuban officer and later a member of the guerrilla force, reportedly made repeated trips to Bolivia between 1962 and 1966 to establish contacts, gather information, and make practical arrangements.[8] According to Cuban sources, Tamara Bunke ("Tania")—an East German woman who figured prominently in the later drama of the jungles—was sent to Bolivia in 1964 with the assignment of establishing an urban network to help the guerrillas.[9]

Early in 1966—probably while he was in Havana for the Tricontinental Conference—Mario Monje Molina, the Secretary-General of the Communist Party of Bolivia, was finally informed of Guevara's plans. Though Monje was later to refuse to support the guerrilla venture—a crucial factor in the events of 1967, as we shall see—a certain number of prominent Bolivian Communists at first collaborated with the Cubans on preparations for the rural guerrilla base and for the supportive urban network which Tania was working to set up. Two Bolivians who actually joined the guerrilla force were the brothers Peredo Leigue—Roberto ("Coco") and Guido ("Inti")—the latter a member of the PCB Central Committee. Following a period of training and planning in Cuba with Guevara, the Peredos were assigned the task of establishing a site for the guerrilla base. Somewhere around the middle of 1966 they chose a ranch north of Lagunillas on the Ñancahuazu River for the guerrillas' central training and supply camp. On November 7, Guevara arrived at the camp, masquerading as an Uruguayan businessman. At the end of that month the guerrilla force consisted of 13 men, mostly Cubans; according to plan, a number of other Cubans were to join the group, and at least 20 Bolivians were to be recruited in the initial phase of operations.[10]

Thus the guerrilla "*foco*" was formed which, according to the notions of Castro, Guevara and Debray, would provide the spark to set off the powder keg of revolution on the Latin American continent. Guevara's diary reveals that the guerrillas were at first in constant touch with Havana and had no trouble receiving the financial and political assistance they needed to pursue their "internationalization" activities. The urban network also seemed to be functioning as planned. An Uruguayan journalist in Fidel Castro's confidence, writing in the spring of 1967, stressed that Guevara's force was operating independently and without responsibility to any "specific party" (meaning the Communist Party)—thus constituting a genuinely new form of guerrilla movement along Debray's theoretical lines.[11]

The Problem of Isolation

Ironically, the revolutionaries' insistence that the guerrilla force be independent—which was intended, in part, to give flexibility to its political operations—had the opposite effect of contributing to its political isolation. On the last day of 1966, PCB Secretary General Monje arrived at the Ñancahuazu camp to confer with Guevara on the question of collaboration between the party and the *foco*. The talks got nowhere. According to reports by both men, Monje maintained that preparatory discussions should be held with representatives of the PCB and other Communist parties on the continent before the start of guerrilla activity; more important, he asserted his right—as head of the Bolivian party—to exercise authority over the political and military operations of the *foco*. This, of course, was totally unacceptable to Guevara.[12] In a later report to the party issued after the destruction of the guerrillas (and after he was no longer head of the PCB), Monje stated that "there was no commitment made to Guevara either before or after December 31 to assist him in the guerrilla warfare which he planned to conduct. . . ."[13]

In subsequent months, the attitude of the Bolivian party leadership revealed the dilemma it confronted. On the one hand, it had no wish to ruffle feelings in Havana or to open itself to charges that it was abdicating its "revolutionary avant-gardist" role. On the other hand, it wanted to demonstrate

[8] Jesus Lara, "Una renuncia remece al PC Boliviana," *Punto Final*, Feb. 25, 1969. See also *Verde Olivo* (Havana), Aug. 3, 1969.

[9] *Bohemia* (Havana), Jan. 17, 1969.

[10] See Guevara's entries in his diary for Nov. 27, 1966, and his monthly summary for November. See also Gott, *op. cit.*; and *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), July 2, 1968.

[11] Carlos Maria Gutierrez, "Bolivia: otra forma de guerrilla," *Marcha*, May 12, 1967.

[12] *Cf.* entry in Guevara's diary for Dec. 31, 1966; and Mario Monje, "Las divergencias del PC boliviano con Che Guevara," *Punto Final*, Feb. 27, 1968.

[13] Monje, *ibid.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its fealty to the Moscow line—which prescribed a legal road to power for the Communist parties of Latin America—and it obviously resented the encroachment of the guerrilla force on its own political preserve; moreover, as a local force with pragmatic leanings, it sensed the suicidal character of Guevara's action. As a consequence, its course appeared ambivalent. In February 1967 Bolivian party leaders went to Havana to negotiate directly with Fidel Castro, but the discussions came to nothing.[14] After Guevara's force was discovered in March and came under attack by Bolivian government troops, the PCB professed its "solidarity" with the guerrillas.[15] Not long afterward Jorge Kolle Cueto, Monje's successor as Secretary-General of the party, remarked ambiguously to newsmen that there were "not only [sic] members of our community" in the guerrilla force.[16] During the Latin American Solidarity Conference, which took place in July-August 1967 in Havana, Castro was apparently furious with the Bolivian Communist delegation because of the party's continued refusal to collaborate with the guerrillas.[17]

The few Bolivian Communists who joined Guevara clearly did so against the wishes of the party leadership, at least in the period after December 1966. According to observers with seemingly reliable information, the *guerrilleros* recruited from the Bolivian Communist Party as well as from other political groups were "marginal types, unconnected with the core of their organizations."[18] Most of the guerrillas of Bolivian nationality (numbering 29 in all[19]) were recruited from among unemployed mine workers by a pro-Chinese Communist mine workers' leader, Moisés Guevara Rodriguez; another group was made up of acquaintances of "Coco" Peredos who, like him, had been taxi drivers; and there were also some students among the recruits. The reliability of the Bolivian combatants does not appear to have been high, since one-third of them deserted and/or collaborated with the authorities after being taken prisoner. In later interviews, Debray felt impelled to refer to this element as *Lumpen*-proletarians.[20]

The alienation of the Bolivian CP was only one of the factors leading to the isolation of the guerrilla force. Two other important factors were the nature of the territory which the guerrillas chose as their zone of operations and their inability to attract the support of the local population.

[14] Entry in Guevara's diary for Feb. 14, 1967; OAS report, *Estudio . . .*, p. 17; Lara, *loc. cit.*

[15] *Cf.*, for example, a PCB declaration published in the Uruguayan Communist paper, *El Popular* (Montevideo), dated April 29, 1967, signed by three high-ranking party officials, including Monje himself.

[16] *El Popular*, May 19, 1967.

[17] See Havana's message to Guevara of Aug. 26, 1967, published in *Punto Final*, July 30, 1968. In this message Castro used the scathing term "*mierda*" to refer to the PCB delegation to the Solidarity Conference.

[18] *International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 16, 1967.

[19] *Estudio . . .*, pp. 49 ff.

[20] The *Times* (London), Oct. 28, 1967; Debray estimated the number of deserters at 15 to 17, but this seems exaggerated. *Cf. Estudio . . .*, p. 51, f.

Captured photo of Guevara's guerrilla band relaxing after a march in the spring of 1967. From left to right: Alejandro (Ricardo Gustavo Machin), Inti (Guido Peredo Leigue), Pombo (Harry Villegas), Acana Campero, "Che" Guevara, Tuma (Guevara's double—name unknown), Camba (Orlando Jimenez) and Joaquin (Juan V. Acuña Nuñez). Reprinted with permission from Jay Mallin, *"Che" Guevara on Revolution*, Coral Gables, Fla., University of Miami Press, 1969.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To describe the area of operations briefly, Guevara and his lieutenants chose a zone in the southeast section of Bolivia comprising a part of the two *departamentos* (or provinces) of Santa Cruz and Chuquisaca. On the eastern boundary of the area was a railroad line running from Santa Cruz into Argentina, while to the south it bordered on the rapidly developing oil production center of Camiri. Despite its proximity to the latter, most of the region was thinly populated and inaccessible, containing both tropical jungles and arid mountain areas. Once the fighting started, the terrain worked against the guerrillas, since they were cut off from contact with the outside world and were therefore unable to get supplies and maintain communications.

In terms of socio-political factors, the area was also a poor choice for the *foco*. For a variety of reasons, the *campesinos*—or peasants—in the area proved entirely unwilling to cooperate with the *guerrilleros*. In part their attitude was a reflection of their way of life. The sparse peasant population was clustered in a few settlements throughout the area and lived mainly by extensive farming. Though the quality of the land imposed a marginal existence, the peasants were not dissatisfied with their lot. One important reason was that they owned their own farms (under a regional land reform dating back to 1878). Moreover, the nearby oil industry at Camiri had been able to absorb those unable to make a living from the soil. Thus, in contrast to the mining districts in northwestern Bolivia, the Southeast had not experienced explosive social problems.[21]

Added to this, the Barrientos regime, as noted earlier, had gone out of its way to court peasant support, and Barrientos himself was well-liked by the farmers; thus, when the skirmishing began, the *campesinos* looked upon the government troops as their own and sided against the guerrillas.[22] A related factor in the peasants' outlook was their strong nationalistic sentiment and dislike of foreigners—and the farmers considered not only the Cubans and Peruvians but even the mine workers from northwest Bolivia as foreigners. Finally, a whole world of experience divided the *campesino* struggling with his workday cares from the ideologically-oriented *guerrillero* who, if he did not come from the middle or upper class himself, was at least led by men of middle or upper-class origins.

The Phases of Fighting

It may now be useful to review in detail the events that marked the ill-starred course of Guevara's venture. In retrospect it is possible to group the operations of the guerrillas into four phases.[23]

The first phase, from November 1966 to March 1967, witnessed the organization of the base at Ñancahuazu. During this phase the *foco* grew in number to about 50 men, including—at one point on record—17 Cubans (of whom four were members of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party), 29 Bolivians, and three Peruvians.[24] This phase ended abruptly on March 23, when—through a combination of carelessness and treachery—the location of the guerrilla force was revealed to Bolivian government troops and the first fighting took place. The initial skirmish actually took the government forces by surprise and cost them seven casualties; but the victory was a Pyrrhic one for the guerrillas, since the discovery of their whereabouts forced them to abandon their efforts to build up a guerrilla network and to concentrate all their energies on the immediate struggle. The outbreak of fighting was partly due to the bungling of the Cuban subcommander "Marcos" (Antonio Sánchez Diaz), whose lack of precautions precipitated the guerrillas' first contact with the enemy. But two other developments were also crucial: first, three Bolivian *guerrilleros* who deserted and were captured between March 11 and 19 furnished government troops with detailed information about the *foco*, its Cuban leaders, and the Ñancahuazu camp; secondly, the government forces uncovered a jeep in the jungle in which compromising documents had been left, through what appeared to be the gross negligence of Tamara Bunke.[25]

---

[21] *Cf.* René Zavaleta Mercado, "Bolivia y America Latina," *Marcha*, May 30, 1969.

[22] On the latter point all observers seem to agree; even Guevara's diary offers confirmation, at least indirectly.

[23] The account that follows is based mainly on Guevara's diary entries and on information in *Estudio . . .*, *loc. cit. Cf.* also Gott, *op. cit.*

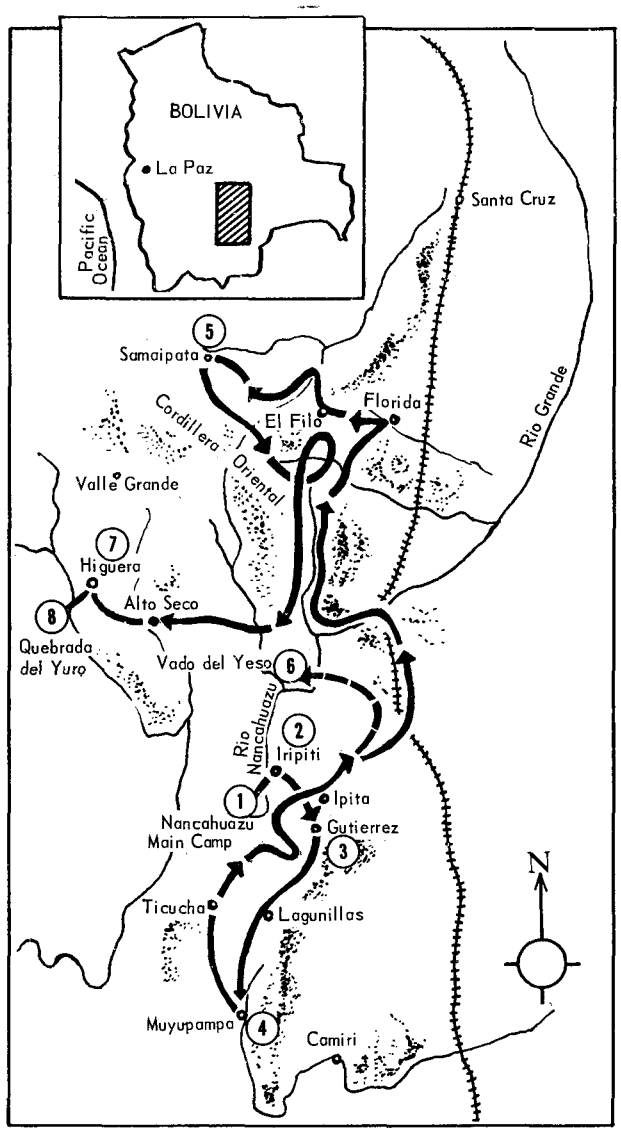
[24] *Estudio . . .*, pp. 49 ff. The guerrillas' urban network consisted of 15 persons at the most.

[25] Whether Tania was guilty of "negligence" or betrayal later became an issue. Months after Guevara's defeat, it was alleged that Tania had been an agent of the East German State Security Service (SSD) since 1961 and had been charged with shadowing Guevara and reporting on his activities: see the statement of Günther Männel, a former SSD officer, about Tamara Bunke in *Welt am Sonntag* (Hamburg), May 26, 1968. See also the *International Herald Tribune*, July 16, 1968; and *Bohemia*, Jan. 17, 1969.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the time of the first encounter, "Tania" was one of four key collaborators who were visiting the guerrilla camp; the others were Debray, the Argentinian artist Ciro Roberto Bustos, and a Peruvian named Juan Pablo Chang Navarro Levano ("Chino"). As a consequence of the premature hostilities, all four were forced to stay with the guerrillas—two until they were captured (Debray and Bustos) and two until they lost their lives (Tania and Chino).[26] Thus they were unable to complete contact work which they had been assigned or which Guevara had in mind for them. Debray, for example, was to have gone on important missions to Havana and France, Bustos to Argentina, and Chang Navarro to Peru; Tania was unable to return to La Paz, where she had been the main link with the urban guerrilla unit and where she had also held an important cover job in the Information Bureau of the government. The entrapment of these four thus contributed critically to the isolation of the guerrillas. Debray and Bustos later made an effort to escape past enemy lines, but they were taken prisoner on April 19.

The second phase of guerrilla activities lasted from March 23 until the beginning of July. In this period the guerrilla force—which now called itself the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN)—was constantly on the move, and in fact split into two groups around the middle of April so as to gain greater mobility. The main contingent commanded by Guevara numbered 25 men; the second group led by the Cuban "Joaquin" (Juan Vitalio Acuña Nuñez) consisted of 17 men. Neither detachment included a single *campesino*, and by this time it must have been clear to Guevara that he would not be able to recruit any more followers. The split-up of the guerrillas was only supposed to last a few days, but the two groups were fated never to meet again. In subsequent weeks both groups undertook a forced march to the north; Guevara's party, after capturing the village of Samaipata, reached the northernmost point of its drive on July 6. In these several months the guerrillas engaged in many minor skirmishes with the enemy, but only one was of any significance—an action near Iripiti on April 10, in which the government lost 11 officers and men. The guerrillas' resistance was severely taxed, however, by the combined impact of miserable conditions, sickness, accidents, declining morale, internal dissensions, casualties, and—of course—isolation, described as "total" by Guevara as early as the end of April.



"Che" Guevara's theater of operations in the Bolivian departments of Santa Cruz and Chuquisaca: (1) First battle near the base camp on the Nancahuazu River, March 23, 1967; (2) battle at Iripiti, April 10; (3) skirmish at Gutierrez, April 19; (4) capture of Debray and Bustos at Muyupampa, April 20; (5) Guevara's victory at Samaipata, July 6; (6) destruction of "Joaquin's" group at Vado del Yeso, August 31 (exact whereabouts from April through August unknown; arrow indicates general area of operations of "Joaquin's" group); (7) fight at La Higuera, September 20; (8) capture of Guevara after battle of Quebrada del Yuro, October 8.

In the third phase of guerrilla operations, stretching from July to the third week in September, Guevara's group withdrew to the southwest as far as La Higuera, reaching there September 25. Meantime "Joaquin's" group had reached and

[26] See Guevara's diary entries for March 20 and 21, 1967, as well as his monthly summaries for March and April.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

continued to operate in the northern part of the Ñancahuazu district, but its strength was gradually reduced to 10 men. On August 31, this group was finally surrounded by government troops near Puerto Mauricio ("Vado del Yeso") and wiped out. Here, too, "Tania" was killed. Two weeks later the fragmentary urban network which she had established for Guevara was put out of commission by security detachments in La Paz.

By this time the army had been reinforced with newly-trained anti-guerrilla units (called "Rangers"), which stepped up efforts to surround and destroy the weary remainder of the guerrilla band. A fight near La Higuera of September 26 reduced Guevara's contingent to 16 men.

The fourth phase of developments marked the death gasps of the "*foco*." The final fighting took place between September 26 and October 8; on the latter date, in an action near Quebrada del Yuro, the guerrilla unit lost seven combatants—among them Guevara himself. According to widely published reports, Guevara was shot the day after he was taken prisoner. The rest of the now leaderless *guerrilleros* fled, with the "Rangers" in pursuit; over the next couple of months, some were captured and some surrendered voluntarily, while a few managed to make good their escape. Three Cubans eventually got back to their homeland via Chile. Two Bolivians, Guido Peredo ("Inti") and David Adriazola ("Dario") remained in Bolivia, working underground in a vain attempt to revive the guerrilla movement; "Inti" was finally killed in September 1969 in La Paz, where he was trying to organize a new urban revolutionary unit.[27] By that time the guerrilla episode was past history to most Bolivians.

The Phenomenon of Publicity

Writing in 1968, a British observer seemed to state the obvious when he remarked that Guevara's small band of insurgents had attracted attention way out of proportion to its effective power, not only on the national level (as reflected in the reaction of the government, press, and people of Bolivia) but around the world.[28] In retrospect it seems amazing that so much exaggerated information pertaining to the strength and effectiveness of the guerrilla force managed to find its way into print. To cite a few examples from scattered sources, it was reported during the spring of 1967 that the *foco* consisted of at least 400 revolutionaries, that this force was being trained by guerrilla veterans from Venezuela, that it had a medical staff, and that it was broadcasting news over a powerful short-wave radio.[29] A French student of guerrilla warfare declared: "The new guerrilla focus seems to constitute the most serious revolutionary initiative in Latin America in the last ten years."[30]

Much of the "news" about the guerrillas issued from sympathetic sources—that is, from Havana and from Castroite supporters, who naturally wished to enhance the importance of Guevara's continental venture; in this effort they simply substituted imagination for information, since in the whole period of fighting Guevara only managed to smuggle out five communiqués.[31] But exaggerated stories were also circulated by other sources—for example, the Bolivian military and government authorities, who may have wished to spur more assistance from the United States. Obviously another reason for the enormous publicity that surrounded the venture was the fact that Guevara—already a legendary hero to revolutionaries around the globe—assumed personal leadership of the *foco*. By the same token, the role of Jules Debray—the ideologist of the so-called "third phase of Castroism"—as Castro's emissary to the guerrilla camp attracted international attention after his capture. The campaign for the release of the then 27-year-old revolutionary got press coverage on a scale that is not often equalled: everyone got into the act, from Debray's conservative and wealthy Parisian mother (who called him "one of France's most brilliant intellectuals" and a "spiritually deeply Christian apostle"), to *The New York Times*' C. L. Sulzberger (who called him "an egocentric hippie"), to Jean Paul

[27] The only known activity of the new ELN commander "Inti" was to issue unrealistic manifestos and communiques that were distributed by Havana to Latin America's left radical press. *E.g.*, see *Punto Final*, Feb. 27, July 30, and Aug. 27, 1968. On "Inti's" death, see AFP and Reuter's reports from La Paz, Sept. 10, 1969; also *Granma* (Havana), Sept. 12, 1969.

[28] Gott, *op. cit.* Gott himself estimated the number of guerrillas at 150—three times the actual strength later revealed by Guevara's diary.

[29] See, *e.g.*, *The New York Times* (Paris edition), April 4, 1967; Associated Press (AP) report from La Paz, April 4, 1967; and AFP and AP reports from La Paz, March 29, 1967.

[30] Marcel Niedergang in *Le Monde* (Paris), May 18, 1967.

[31] *E.g.*, see *Boletin Tricontinental* (Havana), July 1967; and Ojarikuj Runa, "Bolivia—analisis de una situacion," *Pensamiento Critico* (Havana), July 1967. Guevara's communiqués were later printed in *Granma*, No. 28, 1968, and *Punto Final*, July 30, 1968.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sartre, Charles de Gaulle, the Vatican, and indirectly Lyndon B. Johnson.[32] All of this publicity cast a glow on the handful of *guerrilleros* in the jungles of Ñancahuazu.

Reactions of the Regime

While the attention focused on Bolivia may have had some influence on the Barrientos regime, the course it pursued during the period of the guerrilla challenge was dictated in the main by domestic political considerations. To all appearances, when Guevara's force was first discovered, the regime assumed that it had been organized by leftist opposition factions in Bolivia.[33] In terms of numerical strength, the most important of these opposition elements were the aforementioned MNR (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*) and the PRIN (*Partido Revolucionario de Izquierda Nacionalista*), a party led by the exiled mine workers' leader, Juan Lechin Oquendo. These parties, *inter alia*, shared influence with Trotskyite groups and the pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese Communists in the mine workers' organizations.

After the first brush with the guerrillas in March, Barrientos took steps to curtail the activity of the MNR, the PRIN, and the Communists, as well as the Trotskyites in the divided *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* (POR). Following the fight at Iripiti in April, the regime declared a state of emergency which made southeast Bolivia a military zone and outlawed all Communist and Trotskyite organizations.[34] Although the government subsequently relaxed its crackdown, continued restraints on political activity led to restiveness among the miners. In late June Barrientos apparently felt it necessary to order the military occupation of three mining districts (Huanuni, Siglo Veinte and Catavi), leading to an open clash between government soldiers and armed mine workers that reportedly took 21 lives and sparked unrest among university students in the capital.[35]

By this time, however, it had long since become clear to the authorities and to everyone else that no political forces in Bolivia were actively supporting the guerrilla movement. While propaganda friendly to the *foco* had been distributed in the mining areas, the regime made no charges of collaboration against the rebellious mine workers. Thus Barrientos was probably less concerned about the guerrillas than he was about reinforcing his political position when he made his next move: at the end of June he convened a congress of *campesinos*, who made it clear that the loyalties of the agricultural Southeast belonged to the President; they also adopted a declaration labeling the guerrillas an "anti-national" force and promising assistance to the army in its task of pacification.[36]

The convocation of the "National Congress of Peasant Workers of Bolivia" was the last extraordinary political measure taken by the regime in connection with the *guerrilleros*, even though they continued to be active for at least another three months. At no time did the guerrilla campaign seriously threaten the political power of the regime, again due to the fact that the guerrillas failed to establish links with any force of political significance in the country.

Reactions of the Opposition

In the latter respect, there is a good deal in the public record to indicate either ignorance of, or indifference to, the guerrilla movement on the part of precisely those groups who might have been expected to be Guevara's natural collaborators. To the extent that verbal support was expressed at all, it dwindled or was withdrawn as it became clear that the guerrilla mission was doomed to failure. The reaction of the pro-Soviet Communist Party of Bolivia—the one force which Guevara seriously sought and failed to enlist as an ally—has already been described in detail. In the case of the MNR—a party long since weakened by dissension and more tolerated than respected in Barrientos' Bolivia—it seems clear from the statements of various leaders that none of them had any information about the character of the guerrilla operation. For example, after the existence of the *foco* became public knowledge, the exiled MNR chief, Victor Paz Estenssoro, issued statements call-

[32] *E.g.*, see reports of AFP and the Italian news agency ANSA from La Paz, May 6, 1967; and the *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), Oct. 4, 1967.

[33] *E.g.*, see United Press International (UPI) report from La Paz, March 31, 1967.

[34] AFP report from La Paz, April 12, 1967.

[35] *Cf.* Ruben Vasquez Diaz, *La Bolivie a l'heure du Che*, Paris, Francois Maspero, 1968, especially Chapter I.

[36] Discussed, *inter alia*, in Edgar Millares Reyes, *Las Guerrillas: Teoria y Practica*, Sucre, Bolivia, Imprenta Universitaria, 1968, p. 40.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing it "an integral Bolivian phenomenon" and "the result of an internal process" (sic!); initially he expressed "sympathy" for the guerrillas but later prudently advised his followers against taking any part in the movement.[37] Another MNR leader, René Zavaleta Mercado, spoke vaguely of the need for "armed struggle" but did not encourage support for Guevara in specific terms.[38] By September 1967 Raúl Lema Peláez, an MNR senator in La Paz, was ready to declare that the MNR had "no connection with the guerrilla movement whatsoever." [39]

As for the PRIN group, Guevara's diary revealed that its aforementioned leader, Juan Lechin Oquendo, promised Castro in Havana early in 1967 that he would publish a declaration of his party's support for the guerrilla operation, and he fulfilled this promise in a manifesto issued about the first of May.[40] That, however, was the last heard from PRIN until October, when the party withdrew its "endorsement" of the now-defeated forces whom it had hailed six months earlier as the "liberators of the homeland." [41]

The Trotskyites of the POR (Guillermo Lora's group) expressed "solidarity" with the guerrilla force in a Central Committee resolution of April 1967, but that was all. Another Trotskyite group, the *POR—Cuarta Internacional* was even more circumspect in its endorsement.[42]

According to all available evidence, none of these groups ever gave active assistance to the guerrillas. The same was apparently true of the pro-Chinese Bolivian Communist Party, though some confusion surrounded its role. For reasons that were not clear, Castro showed special enmity toward the pro-Chinese Bolivians after the destruction of the guerrilla force, accusing them of treason —even though one of their followers, Moisés Guevara Rodriguez, had been among the most dedicated members of the *foco* and had indeed given his life for it.[43]

The remaining parties and factions in Bolivia, among them the relatively important *Falange Socialista Boliviana*, were opposed to the guerrillas from the start, as they made clear in their public statements and commentaries.[44]

Insofar as active support from outside the country was concerned, once the fighting began, the guerrillas were effectively cut off from all but a trickle of help from Havana. By contrast, Barrientos was able to count on assistance from the United States which, while modest in absolute terms, was substantial in proportion to the small size and strength of Guevara's force. The main US contribution was to conduct an anti-guerrilla training course for several hundred Bolivian soldiers, providing the "Ranger" units which were instrumental in the final defeat of the guerrillas.[45] In the opinion of military observers, by the fall of 1967 the combat effectiveness of the Bolivian troops was sufficient for them to have put down a much stronger guerrilla force than that led by Guevara.

The Causes of Failure

In the course of this paper, a number of the factors that contributed to the failure of Guevara's guerrillas have been suggested. To discuss these factors systematically, it may be useful to classify them in three categories, ranging from the least to the most significant.[46]

The first category covers errors, insufficiencies, or inadvertent developments of a technical or military nature. Certain factors—for example, losses due to illness—were of course beyond anyone's ability to control. But manifold errors were also made—among them, the poor political judgment used in the selection of some of the *guerrilleros*, accounting in part for later desertions and be-

---

[37] See *El Popular*, May 16, 1967; *El Diario* (La Paz), June 16, 1967; Interpress Service (Lima), Aug. 2, 1967; Vasquez, *op. cit.*, pp. 118 ff.; and finally an interview with Paz in *Ultimas Noticias* (Caracas), Aug. 5, 1967.

[38] Vasquez, *ibid.*, pp. 111 ff.

[39] Millares, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

[40] See Guevara's diary entry for April 15, 1967, and AFP report from La Paz, May 2, 1967; see also *International Herald Tribune*, July 2, 1968.

[41] *Presencia* (La Paz), Oct. 31, 1967, as cited in Millares, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

[42] Millares, *ibid.*, pp. 115 f., 119 f.; Vasquez, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

[43] *Cf.* Castro's introduction to Guevara's diary, *loc. cit.*, as well as the pro-Chinese Communists' pronouncement, *Oscar Zamora responde a Fidel Castro*, Montevideo, Ediciones del MIR, 1968.

[44] Pertinent references may be found in Millares, *op. cit.*

[45] Juan de Onis placed the number of Bolivian soldiers trained by US Army personnel at 400: *International Herald Tribune*, July 2, 1968. Another observer, Jay Mallin, estimated the number at a few hundred more: "Che Guevara: Some Documentary Puzzles at the End of a Long Journey," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* (Coral Cables, Fla.), Vol. X, No. 1. See also UPI report from Washington, D.C., March 10, 1968.

[46] The text that follows incorporates some conclusions drawn, *inter alia*, by Gott, *op. cit.*; Debray, the *Times* (London), Oct. 28, 1967; Jacques Arnault, *L'Humanité* (Paris), Nov. 17, 1967; Juan de Onis, *loc. cit.*; and Antonio Arguedas Mendieta, *El Siglo* (Santiago), July 25, 1968. However these sources generally limit themselves to the technical and tactical aspects of Guevara's failure—in other words, to the first two of the author's three categories.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trayals; their insufficient military training, which lessened the striking power of the *foco;* their mania to immortalize themselves in vast quantities of photographs, written documents, and even portrait sketches, which—once captured—were of great help to the government troops; and their initial casual methods of maintaining outside contacts (notably with Havana), stocking supplies, *etc.* All of these errors shed significant light on the military capacities of Guevara and his lieutenants, but they are of only marginal importance in explaining the failure of the guerrilla venture.

The second category consists of more serious inadequacies and errors that can be described as tactical in nature. Two crucial weaknesses of the guerrilla organization were the fragility of its urban network, operated by largely inexperienced personnel, and its virtual lack of security machinery. (In the latter connection, Debray expressed the suspicion that enemy agents had infiltrated the *foco* —without, however, naming names; for information pointing to "Tania" as a likely suspect, see footnote 25.) As for outright errors, first and foremost was the selection of the guerrilla zone—though this was also a matter of faulty strategic conception, as we shall see. Beyond the choice itself, the guerrillas showed negligence in failing to obtain sufficient information about the topography and other natural aspects of the zone of operations. A lack of proper precautions was responsible for a number of other tactical errors, including the premature discovery of the guerrilla base camp and the subsequent loss of supply depots. Taken together, these tactical weaknesses and mistakes would of themselves have been enough to doom the guerrilla adventure, and some observers—particularly those with Castroite sympathies—have tried to argue that they provide, along with the first category of problems, the most meaningful explanation for Guevara's failure.

However, there is another and by far more crucial category of reasons why the mission failed, and these have to do with the fact that the whole concept of the *foco* was based on fallacious strategic doctrines, principles and interpretations. The available evidence seems to indicate that not a single one of the Castroites responsible for launching the guerrilla movement made an objective study in advance of the Bolivian nation, the causes and consequences of its revolution of 1952, or the character of the regime elevated to power by the *coup d'état* of 1964. This alone could explain why the *guerrilleros* were so surprised by their isolation once they were encamped in the country. To the extent that they considered Bolivian factors at all, they misjudged the attitude of the *campesinos*, the strength of the Barrientos government, and the relative popularity of the Bolivian army, which had been overhauled after the 1952 revolution and which enjoyed respect, partly because it had participated for years in economic development projects.

The theorists of guerrilla warfare also ignored the existence of virulent nationalism in Bolivia; by insisting on the organization of an "international" guerrilla movement, they left the field free for Barrientos to appeal to patriotic sentiment and even opened themselves to the charge of neocolonialism *sui generis*, since all the key positions in the *foco* were held by Cubans.

The Castroites' stress on the priority of military over political struggle—and therefore on the need to subordinate political elements to the guerrilla force in any revolutionary situation—led them to forfeit the possibility of collaboration with the Bolivian Communists, whose assistance might not have been large in a concrete sense but would probably have been helpful for propaganda purposes. The same ideological rigidity led them to rule out from the start any possibility of compromise or cooperation with the other forces of the far Left which enjoyed some influence in Barrientos' Bolivia; it was assumed (probably correctly) that such "ideologically foreign" political groups would be non-compliant to the will of the *foco*.

Thus, both through ignorance of the realities of the Bolivian situation and through ideological preconceptions, Guevara's expedition was initiated according to a "grand plan" that relied exclusively on guerrilla warfare to achieve revolution. Ironically, "warfare" is what they got, and it soon revealed the *guerrilleros* for what they really were —a mere half-hundred armed foreigners and Bolivian "*marginados*," gradually reduced to desperation by their isolated condition and waiting for a miracle that never came. In a sense "Castroism" in Bolivia was defeated by the Castroite strategy itself, meeting its end in a military mop-up action.

The Fundamental Fallacy

Going a step farther, in the final analysis the failure of the guerrilla movement in Bolivia—and in all Latin American countries—was the necessary consequence of a Cuban misreading of history. The ideologized reconstruction of Castro's victory,

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fashioned after the event in response to domestic political requirements and to Castroite aspirations in Latin America, opportunistically distorted the situation in Cuba during the years 1953-59.

In the first place, Castro's "*foco*" did *not* create a revolutionary situation where none had existed, as Castroite history would have it; the revolutionary situation existed in Cuba *before* the formation of the guerrilla movement. In the second place, Castroite ideologists have described Castro's guerrilla force as a "peasant army," implying that Fidel succeeded in mobilizing the Cuban peasantry in support of his cause; but in reality, the nucleus of Castro's force was drawn from a small group of middle-class revolutionaries. In the third place, the new history misrepresented the character of the Batista regime—at once dictatorial and weak—by equating it with those of Ydigoras Fuentes or Mendez Montenegro in Guatemala, of Romulo Betancourt or Raoul Leoni in Venezuela, of Lleras Restrepo in Colombia, of Belaunde Terry in Peru, and finally of René Barrientos in Bolivia. In so doing, it implied that all Latin American leaders were as vulnerable to revolutionary overthrow as Fulgencio Batista had been. In the fourth place, ridiculous parallels were drawn between the Cuban Sierra Maestra and the Bolivian Andes; between Cuban city youth on the one hand and upland *Indios* and Brazilian *caboclos* on the other. In the fifth place, no mention was made of the assistance that had been extended to Castro by populist parties in Latin America and also by liberal groups in the United States of America, because such assistance did not fit the postrevolutionary image of the *Lider maximo*. Finally, no recognition was given to the fact that Castro owed a good deal of his success in the 1950's to his purposeful ambiguity concerning his ideological convictions, accounting for the support he won from all Cuban democrats (but *not* the Communists); hence, misleading comparisons were made between Castro's course and that pursued by his followers in the 1960's, who loudly proclaimed their adherence to a "Cuban" type of Marxism-Leninism (much as the validity of that ideological compound might be challenged by other leftists), and who as a result were opposed by all political groups of any consequence *except* the Communists (and even the support furnished by the latter was hesitant, ineffective, ambivalent and intermittent, as we have seen).

Given these fallacies built into Castroite historiography and *a fortiori* into the Castroite model of revolution, it is no wonder that Havana failed in its effort to export its revolution to the Latin American continent. Looking beyond Guevara's misadventure in Bolivia to guerrilla efforts in other Latin American countries, in no case has a guerrilla movement based on the Cuban model achieved enough strength to pose a serious threat to a ruling government regardless of whether the latter was a progressive regime or a dictatorship. In a few instances, other types of guerrilla forces have operated temporarily with somewhat more success, but none has escaped eventual extinction.

In Guatemala, for example, guerrilla forces have existed since the early 1960's. Those of Castroite persuasion have failed to shake the security of the government in any way; in fact, their acts of terrorism have been counterproductive in that they have contributed to public unrest and invited retaliation, giving aid and comfort to the extreme Right and impeding the economic and social modernization of the country. A Trotskyite guerrilla group which for years operated independently had some success in winning over the *campesinos* with its down-to-earth ideology; eventually, however, the Guatemalan army eliminated these revolutionaries as an effective force.

In Venezuela—which for a variety of economic, political and geographic reasons was long Castro's primary target on the continent—the guerrilla movement dwindled down to nothing after leadership conflicts led the Communist Party of Venezuela to sever relations with the guerrillas and government troops then decimated their ranks.

In Colombia, guerrilla activity has similarly died down. It is worth noting that armed insurgents were operating in Colombia long before Castro came to power—in fact, since the disastrous *violencia* that started in 1948. For several years, a guerrilla force led by the Colombian Communist Party managed to win the support of a portion of the peasantry in a few districts, but it disintegrated after the government succeeded in pacifying the countryside and the party changed its strategy to accord with the Moscow line of pursuing power by peaceful means. Several efforts were made to launch a Castroite guerrilla movement, the last in 1965; but the *foco* was unable to muster enough strength to become active, even though it attracted to its ranks a man of the stature of Father Camilo Torres.

In Peru, as noted earlier, armed peasant organizations operated with some success in the province of Cuzco in 1962-63, under the leadership of the Trotskyite Hugo Blanco. However, the Castroite guerrilla band organized in 1965 was destroyed

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

within a few months. A number of small Castroite "*focos*" were formed in other countries (several times, in fact, in Argentina and Brazil), but they fell apart so quickly that the world press hardly had occasion to note their existence.[47]

The fiasco in Bolivia seems to have been the final straw that convinced Castro of the impracticality of his hopes for a "second Cuba." Today—some years since the orthodox Communists on the continent were assaulted by Havana for having abandoned guerrilla adventures—Castro himself is under attack by such adherents of the "*foco*" theory as Douglas Bravo in Venezuela and Fabio Vasquez Castaño in Colombia. Both have accused Castro of "betrayal of the guerrilla," indicating that Cuba—presumably because of Soviet pressure as well as domestic economic problems—has now made it clear she can no longer give them assistance.

Castro's belated realism cannot reverse the mistakes of the past. Let us hope, however, that it has helped to dampen the fervor of those who have glorified guerrilla warfare as the only means to achieve social and economic justice, not seeing that all it has really ever accomplished was to encourage political polarization and extremism on the Right as well as on the Left in the Latin American nations. If the futility of the guerrilla strategy has indeed become recognized, then a small step forward has been taken at least toward the understanding—if not toward the solution—of the complex social, economic and political tensions that characterize Latin American life.

[47] A new type of "armed struggle" has sprung up in the last few years, particularly in Uruguay and Brazil, in the form of "urban" guerrilla units; however, they appear to be only indirectly tied to or motivated by Castroism. So far police efforts to curb their activity have had indifferent success; at the same time, it is impossible to imagine that they could achieve genuine revolutionary victories.

The Communist Parties of Latin America

By Robert J. Alexander

Somewhat like Caesar's Gaul, Latin American communism is divided, if not into three parts, into three kinds of parties: those which follow Moscow, those which are oriented toward Peking, and those which accept Havana's leadership.

Mr. Alexander has written a number of books on communism in Latin America, the latest of which is The Communist Party of Venezuela *(Stanford, Calif., Hoover Institution Press, 1969). He is a professor at the College of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University.*

At present, orthodox Moscow-oriented Communist parties exist in twenty of the twenty-one Latin American republics, including Guyana, the former British colony which attained independence only last February. The sole exception is Cuba, whose present Fidelista Communist Party takes an ideological position of its own, independent of both Moscow and Peking.

Of the parties aligned with Moscow, several antedate even the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The Communist parties of Chile and Uruguay were originally organized as Socialist parties prior to

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1910 and affiliated themselves with the Communist International soon after its establishment in 1919. The Argentinian Communist Party started life as a splinter group of the *Partido Socialista Internationalista* in 1918 and joined the Communist International at its First Congress in 1919.

Other orthodox Communist parties are of more recent origin. The Brazilian Communist Party was established in 1922 by a group of anarcho-syndicalist unionists, while the Communist parties of El Salvador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Honduras were not established until the 1940's. The People's Progressive Party of Guyana was formed in the early 1950's but only declared itself to be an orthodox Communist organization at the international conference of "Communist and Workers' Parties" in Moscow in June 1969.

Evolution of the Orthodox Parties

The objectives of the Latin American Communist parties in the early years until 1935 were consistently oriented toward extending their political base by gaining influence over the trade unions, although the tactics employed varied with changes in line decreed by the Communist International. Thus, during most of the 1920's, the Latin American Communists, following Comintern instructions, sought to penetrate the existing labor organizations in order to control them from within. Subsequently, during the period 1928-34, when the Comintern ordered complete non-collaboration with social democratic, anarcho-syndicalist, and other leftist groups, the Latin American Communists organized their own separate labor confederations in various countries, each under the direct control of the national party. These national confederations were brought together in a continent-wide organization, the *Confederacion Sindical Latino-Americana*, founded at Montevideo in 1929.

In 1935, still another change in the Comintern line—this time from political sectarianism to "popular-front" tactics—not only spelled the death of the *Confederacion Syndical Latino-Americana* but led to the dissolution of the national Communist-dominated trade unions and the entrance of their members into labor organizations under the control of Socialists or other moderate left-wing parties.

The popular-front strategy also brought the Communist parties more directly into the political arena, largely as a result of their attempts to fashion "anti-fascist" coalitions with other leftist parties. In fact, a coalition embracing the Communists, Socialists, (non-Marxist) Radicals, and several minor parties succeeded in electing the Radical Pedro Aguirre Cerda as President of Chile in December 1938; however, the Communists did not take part in his government. In Mexico, the popular-front line led to Communist support of the reformist administration of President Lazaro Cardenas.

In several countries, the popular-front strategy was applied in rather peculiar fashion. In Brazil, an organization called the *Alianza Nacional Libertadora* (Alliance for National Liberation) or ANL was formed by the Communists in 1935 with the intention of bringing together most left-wing groups in a popular front against the dictatorial regime of Getulio Vargas. However, in the late 1930's, when Vargas turned against his former allies—the green-shirted, fascistic *Integralistas* with their German and Italian connections—the Communists shifted over to support of his government on the ground that it constituted the most effective guarantee against penetration by the Fascist powers, and they stuck to this line even after Vargas suppressed an attempted revolt by the ANL and jailed most of the country's Communist leaders. In Cuba, as related in detail elsewhere in this issue, the Communists entered into an alliance with the dictator Fulgencio Batista from 1938 to 1944 and, in return for their support, were rewarded with positions in the government as well as full control of the labor movement.

The popular-front line was briefly dropped by the Latin American Communists during the years 1939-41 while the Soviet Union was formally allied with Nazi Germany. Professing to see no difference between the Nazis and the Western powers, the Communists raucously demanded that their respective countries observe strict "neutrality" in the "imperialistic" conflict. However, after the Soviet Union was attacked by the Nazis in September 1941, the Communists again executed an about-face, and for the duration of the war, they pursued a policy of collaborating with any Latin American regime, whatever its political complexion, which supported the Allied cause.

As a result of this policy of collaboration, the Communist parties of Latin America reached what was, in retrospect, the high point of their influence. They came to dominate the labor movements of most of the Latin American countries as well as the only hemisphere-wide labor group, the

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Confederacion de Trabajadores de America Latina (Workers' Confederation of Latin America) or CTAL. For a time, they furnished cabinet ministers to the governments of President Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra of Ecuador and President Fulgencio Batista of Cuba. (The two Communist ministers in Batista's government were Juan Marinello and Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, both of whom were to be given important posts after the establishment of Castro's regime).

A third case of Communist participation in a Latin American government occurred in Chile shortly after the war, when President Gabriel Gonzalez Videla, elected in November 1946, gave Communist ministers three out of nine seats in his cabinet. Six months later, however, he asked for their resignations and subsequently outlawed the Communist Party.

Decline of the Orthodox Parties

During the 1950's, with the Cold War in full swing, the influence of the orthodox Communist parties declined drastically, partially because of the Communists' violent and self-defeating opposition to all Latin American governments friendly to the United States, but more importantly because other political movements and leaders—Juan Peron in Argentina, Getulio Vargas in Brazil, and left-wing democratic political parties in Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela and Peru—caught the imagination of the masses.[1] At the same time, the Communists lost their former dominant positions in the national labor movements of the various Latin American countries, and the CTAL was reduced to little more than a general staff guiding the activities of Communist groups active in Latin American labor organizations. Generally speaking, the Communists once again became almost completely isolated from other left-wing political elements in all the Latin American countries, except temporarily in Guatemala. There, during the left-leaning administration of President Jacobo Arbenz (1951-54), the Communists gained control of the labor movement and were moving quickly towards obtaining control of the government when they were thwarted by the sudden overthrow of the Arbenz regime in June 1954.[2]

The political isolation of the orthodox Communist parties was temporarily lifted in 1959 as a result of the wave of enthusiasm with which the Latin American Left (and many conservative elements as well) greeted Castro's revolution. The overthrow of what had become one of the most repressive Latin American dictatorships, accomplished through a guerrilla war launched by 13 young men, evoked a hemisphere-wide wave of support in which the Communists were able to join notwithstanding their own past reservations about the correctness of Castro's method; and for a time at least, they were in a position to exploit it for the purpose of building of bridges between themselves and not only the left-democratic parties, which had for years refused to have any dealings with the Communists, but also with a number of far-left extremist groups of recent origin.

However, this readmission of the old-line Communists into the political life of Latin America (or, at least, into its left wing) was relatively short-lived, mainly as a result of the activities of Peking and Havana. In 1960, when Peking began openly to challenge Moscow's hegemony in the world Communist movement, various pro-Chinese splinter groups broke away from the orthodox pro-Soviet parties, primarily because of their dissatisfaction with the latter's adherence to the "peaceful" road to power based on long-term preparation of the urban proletariat via education and organization. Instead, they advocated warfare based on the peasant masses as the only effective path to power. At the same time, Castro in 1961 issued his own challenge to the orthodox Communist line in calling for the immediate spread of the Cuban type of guerrilla revolution to the rest of Latin America, under the leadership not of the Communist Party but of revolutionary *focos* (nuclei) of Castroite guerrilla commanders. (Both the Chinese and the Castroite positions on this issue will be discussed in greater detail below.)

The orthodox Communist parties generally were not attracted to either of these lines, preferring instead to adhere to the relatively moderate and flexible political line prescribed by Moscow. Apart from the ideological differences briefly sketched

[1] For detailed accounts of the history of the orthodox Communist parties in Latin America, see the author's *Communism in Latin America*, Rutgers University Press, 1957; and Rollie Poppino, *International Communism in Latin America: A History of the Movement, 1917–1963*, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1964.

[2] For a thorough discussion of the role of the Guatemalan Communists during the Arevalo and Arbenz administrations, see Ronald Schneider, *Communism in Guatemala, 1944–1954*, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1958.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

above, there are several further reasons which explain both the moderate stance of these parties and their continued loyalty to Moscow.

For one thing, most of the higher and middle-level leaders of the old-line Communist parties had been trained in the USSR and Eastern Europe, where they had been thoroughly indoctrinated with the idea that the Soviet Union was the "workers' fatherland" and their duty was to defend it. Hence it was exceedingly difficult for them to oppose the Soviet line inasmuch as this would mean renouncing the image of the USSR and the conception of their own role which they had cultivated for most of their adult lives. For another, the leadership of the pro-Moscow parties was middle-aged or older and consequently little attracted to a revolutionary strategy requiring the waging of guerrilla war in rural areas, jungles, and mountain terrain. Finally, the orthodox parties had a good deal to lose by adopting the guerrilla road to power as advocated by Mao and Castro. As things stood, they enjoyed varying degrees of influence in the various national labor movements; several of them had representatives sitting in national or regional legislatures; almost all owned newspapers and periodicals as well other property; and most were recognized political parties with a clearly delineated place in the political spectrum of their respective countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that their leaders were loath to risk all this on the dubious chance of gaining power by armed warfare.

For all these reasons, the traditional Communist parties in Latin America have generally remained loyal to Moscow. Only a few have experimented with the different types of guerrilla warfare advocated by Peking and Havana, and their experiences have provided an additional argument against the adoption of "adventurist" policies.

The best-known example of an orthodox Communist party engaging in guerrilla warfare has been provided by the Venezuelan CP. In 1962, it joined with the extremist pro-Castro *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Movement of the Revolutionary Left), or MIR, in launching a combined rural guerrilla war and urban terror campaign against the reform regime of President Romulo Betancourt. During the first phase of the campaign, which lasted until late 1963, the emphasis was primarily on urban guerrilla warfare, featuring bank robberies, setting fire to warehouses and factories, assassinations of policemen, and kidnapings. However, these efforts proved more of a nuisance than a serious threat to the regime, and after the failure of their most ambitious undertaking—an attempt to frighten the Venezuelan population (especially the urban population) into staying away from the polls during the December 1963 elections—the insurrectionists shifted over mainly to rural insurgency. For about a year and a half, rural guerrilla warfare constituted a troublesome problem for the reformist government of President Raoul Leoni, who had succeeded Betancourt in 1963. However, by the middle of 1965, it became obvious that this, too, was a failure.[3]

Before and After

As regards the general strategic road in Latin America, there exists practically complete unanimity: armed struggle here is the rule, and the peaceful way the exception.

—Francisco Mieres, member of the CPV Central Committee, "Lessons of October and Contemporary Revolutionary Movements in Latin America," World Marxist Review (Toronto), November 1967, p. 80.

The legalization of the party is the result partly of its decision to revise its tactical line following a series of military and political reverses. . . . The Communist Party of Venezuela will continue its firm and militant opposition to the regime, while at the same time using all legal avenues to rally the working class and all other exploited sections of the population to fight for their liberation, for true revolutionary changes, for the abolition of imperialist domination, for democracy and socialism in our country.

—Juan Rodriguez, member of the CPV Central Committee, "Venezuela: Communist Party Regains its Legality," World Marxist Review (Toronto), May 1969, p. 41.

[3] For an extended discussion of the Venezuelan Communist Party's experiment with guerrilla warfare, see the author's *The Communist Party of Venezuela*, Stanford, Calif., Hoover Institution Press, 1969.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Moreover, the PCV had to pay a severe penalty for its part in the attempt to overthrow the government by force. The party was declared illegal in June 1962 and lost its representation in the Venezuelan legislature, where it had had a senator and half a dozen deputies. It also lost virtually all of its influence among organized labor (in the early 1960's it had controlled 25 percent of the Venezuelan labor movement), as well as much of its once extensive influence in various professional organizations; and it once again found itself shunned by other political groups. Membership declined to a fraction of its former size.

The Guatemalan Communist Party, the *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo* (Guatemalan Labor Party) or PGT, had a similar experience. Forced by its radical members to join in a guerrilla movement during the mid-1960's, the party became disillusioned with the lack of results and eventually decided in 1968 to withdraw from the struggle. This decision provoked a violent attack on the party by Castro, as had the similar decision taken by the Communist Party of Venezuela.[4]

The Pro-Peking Parties

All of the pro-Chinese Communist parties in Latin America came into being as result of schisms in the established pro-Soviet parties over the fundamental issue of the most effective strategy for the conquest of power. The refusal of the orthodox party leaderships to contemplate abandonment of the peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism in favor of the militant strategy preached by the Chinese Communists aroused dissatisfaction among the more radical elements in the party ranks, with the result that some of these disaffected groups broke away to form splinter Communist parties supporting the doctrines of Mao Tse-tung.

As a general rule, the leaders of the pro-Peking splinter parties were former dissidents within the top echelons of the old-line parties. Frustrated by the adherence of the old-guard leaderships to a Moscow-dictated strategy line which offered no prospect of an early acquisition of power, they saw a welcome alternative in the rival Maoist doctrine of revolutionary militancy and sought to capitalize on the Sino-Soviet rift by splitting away from the orthodox parties and setting up their own organizations aligned ideologically with Peking. Some of the secondary leaders of these splinter parties and a large part of their rank-and-file members were drawn from among the younger elements and youth organizations of the pro-Moscow parties, similarly disillusioned by the non-militant conservatism of the old-line leaderships.

By 1968, the Chinese claimed that there were ten Communist parties in Latin America aligned with Peking.[5] Actually there were eleven pro-Maoist party organizations: in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil (the Chinese may have left out Puerto Rico in their calculations). Comments on a few of the more important of these parties are in order.

The oldest pro-Chinese party is the so-called *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (Communist Party of Brazil), which originated from a struggle for control of the traditional pro-Moscow *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Communist Party). The latter had been outlawed in 1947, and for a dozen years thereafter, its secretary-general, Luis Carlos Prestes, remained in hiding, losing virtually all contact with the secondary leaders and general membership of the party. Effective control of the party apparatus thus fell into the hands of a small group including ex-trade-union leader Joao Amazonas, ex-deputy Mauricio Grabois, and Diogenes Arruda. In 1959, however, Prestes came out of hiding and was subsequently tried and cleared of charges that had been brought against him at the time of his removal from the Senate in 1948. This enabled him to resume contact with the lower party leadership as well as the rank-and-file membership, and he eventually succeeded in regaining effective leadership of the party, thanks largely to the fact that he still enjoyed far greater personal popularity both within the party and among the general public than the bureaucrats who had dominated the party in his absence and who were now his rivals for the leadership. In addition, Prestes had the advantage of enjoying the confidence and support of Moscow. Grabois, Amazonas and their associates tried to block Prestes' resumption of party control, but when a showdown came in 1961, Prestes emerged victorious. The defeated leaders then withdrew from the party and established the

[4] For a discussion of Communist participation in guerrilla warfare in Guatemala, see Eduardo Galeano, *Guatemala: Occupied Country*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1969.

[5] See *Peking Review*, January 19, 1968.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rival Communist Party of Brazil, which adopted pro-Chinese ideological positions.[6]

The great majority of the Communist rank and file stayed with Prestes' Brazilian Communist Party, which between 1961 and 1964 was closely allied with the government of President Joao Goulart. The pro-Peking Party, on the other hand, opposed any kind of collaboration with the "petty bourgeois" Goulart government as a betrayal of Marxism-Leninism. After the overthrow of Goulart in April 1964, both Communist parties were driven underground by the succeeding military regime. The pro-Moscow party has since continued to oppose any attempt at the forcible overthrow of the regime and urges instead the formation of a popular democratic front of all opposition elements, but important segments of the party have broken away to engage in urban guerrilla activities against the military government. One such terrorist group was organized and led by Carlos Marighella, a onetime Communist member of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (1945-48), who was killed in a clash with the police in 1969. On the other hand, there is no concrete evidence that the pro-Peking Communist Party of Brazil, though formally committed to the violent road to power, has participated seriously in such guerrilla activities.

A somewhat similar split occurred in the old-line Communist Party of Ecuador as a result of growing dissatisfaction inside the party with the conservative leadership of Pedro Saad, who had been the principal figure in the party since the early 1940's. During the fourth administration of President Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra, which began in 1960, Saad's opponents within the party urged that the leadership should prepare for the likelihood of a military *coup d'état,* but Saad refused to believe that this would occur, with the result that when the *coup* actually took place, Saad and many of his subordinates fell victim to arrest by the new military regime. The oppositionists, on the other hand, had gone into hiding and thus were able to assume temporary leadership of the party. The end result of the conflict was the emergence of two separate parties, both calling themselves the Communist Party of Ecuador. The party that remained under Saad's leadership maintained its loyalty to Moscow, while the rival party aligned itself with Peking. The latter group evidently planned to launch a guerrilla war with the aid of funds supplied from abroad, but the plan was thwarted when the courier carrying the money was arrested upon arriving in the country by air from China.

The only Maoist Latin American party which has had a limited measure of success in establishing a guerrilla front has been the self-styled Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist-Leninist). This party, which was established by disaffected elements of the Communist youth organization, controls one of several groups carrying on anti-government guerrilla activities in the countryside, but it has not been able to gain any significant support among the general population or in the labor movement. The regular Communist Party of Colombia, aligned with Moscow, remains in control of a significant segment of organized labor and ran candidates in the April 1970 general elections.

Thus, the pro-Peking Communist parties have so far remained a relatively small and inconsequential element in the Latin American extreme Left. It is doubtful that these parties anywhere in the hemisphere can compare with their pro-Moscow rivals in size and influence, and they are little more than a nuisance to some of the regular pro-Moscow parties.

Castro and the Communists

Since coming to power in January 1959, Castro has played a kind of cat-and-mouse game with Cuba's pro-Soviet orthodox Communists. During the first months of his regime, he allowed them to function and did not object to giving them some fairly important secondary positions in the new government. Nine months after seizing power, he formed an open alliance with them, and early in 1961 he proclaimed his regime to be "Marxist-Leninist." In July of the same year, he announced the merger of his own "July 26 movement" with the old-line Communist *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP).

Immediately following the merger, Castro entrusted the organization of the new unified party (first named the Integrated Revolutionary Organization) to Anibal Escalante, one of the most experienced leaders of the old PSP. Escalante proceeded to place his former PSP colleagues in charge of virtually all local and regional units of the new party, and old-line Communists also moved into control of the powerful National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), the Cuban Confederation of Workers, and the University of Havana.

[6] For a thorough account of the internal struggles in the Brazilian Communist Party, see Osvaldo Peralva's *O Retrato,* Rio de Janeiro, Editora O Globo, 1962.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In March 1962, Castro forcefully reasserted his authority. In a series of speeches, he denounced the old-line Communists, removed Escalante, and took over the secretary-generalship of the party himself. Escalante went into exile for several years.

Since then, the domination of the Castro group over the old-line Communists has been steadily strengthened. The latter were deprived of most of the key government posts they had been given before Escalante's removal, and early in 1965 Castro again cracked down on them in conjunction with the trial of an ex-member of the Communist Youth organization on charges of treason against the Revolution in 1957. The chief victim this time was Joaquin Ordoqui, who was removed as Vice-Minister of Defense and put in jail, where he died some time later.[7]

Castro's last major onslaught on the old-line Communists occurred in 1968, with the public trial of a "microfaction" of former PSP members, headed again by Escalante, who were condemned largely on the ground of their close associations with Moscow.[8] The trial served to underscore the fact that Cuba's veteran pro-Soviet Communists have been reduced to the status of very minor partners of the Fidelista Communists.

The relations of the Castro regime with the pro-Moscow Communist parties in other Latin American countries have zigzagged erratically during the last decade. The course of these relations has been profoundly influenced by Castro's desire to export his revolution to the Latin American continent and to be recognized as a world leader; it has also depended at any given moment on Castro's current standing with the USSR.

Havana's relations with the pro-Moscow parties have passed through several phases. At first, these parties were enthusiastic about Castro's Revolution; however, it took them several years to regard him as anything more than a "petty bourgeois" leader, despite his proclamation of the Marxist-Leninist nature of the Cuban Revolution in 1961. Their relations with him took a turn for the worse in 1962 and 1963, after he had quarreled with the orthodox Cuban Communists. During this period, Castro tended to associate more closely with Fidelista or "Jacobin Left" groups than with orthodox Communist parties in the other Latin American countries.

In 1964 there was again a turn toward a rapprochement. Toward the end of that year a conference of pro-Moscow parties was held in Havana, and Castro seems to have agreed to work chiefly with them. However, he certainly did not break off relations with other groups.

The Tricontinental Congress in Havana in January 1966 marked the beginning of a new period of severely strained relations. Then and for some time afterward, Castro appeared to be trying to establish himself as the leader of a kind of "third force" in world communism. At the Congress itself, he bitterly denounced the "big-power chauvinism" of the Chinese; but in subsequent months he made several attacks against the Soviet Union in thinly-veiled language. At the same time, he engaged in polemics with the leaders of several Latin American parties, including those of Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, and most particularly Venezuela. In an all-out effort to export the Cuban Revolution to the continent, he sought to stimulate guerrilla wars in a number of countries and declared that the only "true Communists" were those ready to undertake guerrilla struggles against their national governments.[9]

Castro's attitude changed again rather dramatically during 1968–69. Probably because of several factors—including the failure of guerrilla war in several countries, Soviet pressure, and his preoccupation with the campaign to produce 10 million tons of sugar—his posture began to mellow not only toward the Soviet Union, but also toward the pro-Moscow Latin American parties. For the last year, these relations appear to have been most cordial.

Havana's relations with the pro-Peking parties have been much less complex; in fact, for the most part, the Cubans have ignored them, although a few delegates from the pro-Chinese parties did attend the OLAS (Organization of Latin American Solidarity) Conference in Havana in mid-1967. Régis Debray, in his semi-official statement of Fidelista ideology, *Revolution in the Revolution*, published early in 1967, made it clear that the Castroites did not hold the pro-Chinese parties in

[7] For a fictionalized but accurate account of the fall of Joaquin Ordoqui, see Carlos Manuel Pellicer, *Utiles Despues de Muertos*, Mexico City, B. Costa-Amic, 1966.

[8] An extensive account of the trial of the "microfaction" of Anibal Escalante can be found in *World Outlook*, a publication of the Trotskyite Socialist Workers' Party of the United States, in its issue for the month of March 1968.

[9] For an extensive account of Castro's relations with the orthodox Communist parties, see Bruce Jackson, *Castro, The Kremlin and Communism in Latin America*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Latin America in particular regard: specifically, he charged them with having the same bureaucratic weaknesses as the stronger pro-Moscow parties. For their part, the pro-Peking parties have engaged in bitter polemics with Fidelista groups in their respective countries, and sometimes with Castro himself. These verbal battles have been attributable at least in part to the pro-Chinese Communists' need to "differentiate their product" from that of Castro and his followers.

The Fidelista Communists

Castro has received his most loyal and continuous support from the Latin American "Jacobin Leftists." These are groups which sprang up for the most part among the more radical elements of the Democratic Left parties during the 1950's and early 1960's. They were spurred mainly by disillusionment over what seemed to them the slowness of the new regimes created following the overthrow of a series of Latin American dictatorships in the late 1950's to proceed with serious reforms, as well as over the apparent lack of concern on the part of the United States about Latin American problems of economic development and military usurpations of power. What strength they had tended to be concentrated among students and young professional people generally drawn from the upper and upper-middle classes. They had little backing either in the urban labor movement or among the peasantry.

A series of Jacobin Leftist organizations came into being in a number of Latin American countries. In Venezuela, Peru, Chile, and perhaps one or two other countries, they took the name of *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Left Movement), or MIR; elsewhere they adopted other titles. In addition to these more or less distinct, organized and disciplined parties, Jacobin Leftist elements were to be found in several Socialist parties—notably those of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay—and even in some Christian Democratic groups. In several countries, they were divided among several small groups which often were in competition with one another.

In Fidel Castro the Jacobin Leftists found a catalyst. They were enthusiastic about his revolution from the very beginning, and his *ex post facto* proclamation of faith in Marxism-Leninism did not lessen their enthusiasm since they, too, were avowed believers in the same ideology. Nor was their faith in Fidel diminished by the violence of his methods, the dictatorial character of his rule, and his xenophobia.

It was these Jacobin Leftist groups which were most willing to respond to Castro's call for armed guerrilla struggle to spread the revolution. During the 1960's, they launched such struggles in Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, but nowhere did these campaigns succeed in becoming more than a nuisance to the established governments. In most cases, the guerrilla movements were virtually or completely obliterated.

In any event, by the mid-1960's, the Jacobin Leftists had become the staunchest and most consistent adherents of Castro and his special brand of Marxism-Leninism. Together with Castro's purged and reformed Cuban Communist Party, they thus have come to constitute a third element in the Communist movement in Latin America, as opposed to the pro-Moscow and pro-Peking varieties.[10] They may best be labeled the Fidelista Communists.

There is no question that Castro and his followers have developed their own distinctive Fidelista brand of Communist ideology. Since Castro himself has never been a theorist, however, the essential features of the Fidelista ideology owe most to Ernesto "Che" Guevara and the young French Marxist-Leninist Régis Debray, who attached himself to Castro and his retinue during the middle 1960's.

In this writer's view, Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution* can be regarded as a more or less official statement of the Fidelista ideology. It has been widely distributed by the Cuban regime throughout Latin America, and perhaps elsewhere as well, and no authoritative Cuban spokesman, to the writer's knowledge, has ever taken issue with its content. The work elaborates a number of ideas at variance with orthodox Marxist-Leninist doctrine, principally with regard to the strategy and tactics for attaining power. Debray posits guerrilla war as the only effective way to achieve Communist victory, at least in the underdeveloped countries. Moreover, he goes on to argue that it is not necessary to wait for the maturing of objective revolutionary conditions before launching a guerilla struggle. It is possible, he maintains, for a group of determined revolutionaries to establish "nuclei" (*focos*) of revolu-

[10] For a more extensive discussion of the Jacobin Leftists and their relationship to Castro, see "Fidelismo—and the State of Revolution" in the March 25, 1968, issue of *Current Affairs Bulletin*, published by the University of Sydney, Australia.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion in isolated parts of the countryside and from there begin to undermine the authority of the existing government.

Debray shares the orthodox Leninist's scorn for the inertia and insufficient revolutionary consciousness of the masses, both urban and peasant, who he says will come over to the revolution only when they sense that it is going to succeed. However—and most heretical of all from the Leninist viewpoint—he contends that there is no need for a party to assume leadership of the guerrilla struggle, and that, on the contrary, the party will evolve out of the guerrilla army. He sees the leadership of the revolutionary "nuclei" as coming from the middle and upper-class youth. These young leaders, he argues, need have no "proletarian class consciousness" to begin with, because they will gradually acquire it through association with peasants and workers in the guerrilla struggle.

Another deviant element in the Fidelista Communist ideology is the contribution of Che Guevara —namely, his emphasis on "moral incentives." Guevara rejects the Soviet idea that during the period of "socialism" workers must be stimulated to produce more by means of material rewards, arguing that such a policy is "immoral" and only serves to perpetuate a capitalist mentality. Instead, he maintains, the "new Communist man" must be developed during the socialist phase through a process of teaching the workers to respond to moral rather than material incentives. Since 1966, this has been official dogma in Castro's Cuba. In practical terms, it has meant forced labor for a major proportion of the Cuban people, who—for example —were mobilized by the regime for an all-out (though unsuccessful) effort to produce 10 million tons of sugar in 1970. (On this subject, see Mr. Gonzalez's article on p. 12—Ed.)

Ideological Differences

Pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese Communists in Latin America have been highly critical of the ideological positions of the Fidelistas. The principal objection of the pro-Moscow Communists has been to the attempt of Castro and his followers to transform their own path to power in Cuba into a hard-and-fast model for all of Latin America. Perhaps the clearest statement of this position came from the Venezuelan Communist Party during its polemic with Castro after it had abandoned its ill-starred experiment with guerrilla tactics. The Venezuelan party accused Castro not only of trying to set himself up as an arbiter of Communist orthodoxy for the whole hemisphere, but also of attempting to impose on the other Communist parties of the area a strategy which he himself had not carried out under similar conditions. More specifically, it taunted him with the fact that during his guerrilla war of two years against Batista he had never proclaimed himself a Communist, and asked rhetorically what would have happened to his revolution if he had done so. The Venezuelan Communists reasserted the right of every Communist party to determine for itself the correct revolutionary strategy for its own country. This stand has been repeated by the pro-Moscow Communist parties in a number of other Latin American countries including Chile and Guatemala.

The pro-Peking Communists have, if anything, been even more bitter in their denunciations of the Fidelista ideology. Despite the fact that the Chinese were the originators of the guerrilla warfare strategy used by Castro and later advocated by him for the rest of Latin America, they and their Latin American followers have gone out of their way to stress that Mao Tse-tung always taught the necessity to wait until the "objective conditions" for revolutionary action had developed. Accordingly, the pro-Peking groups have emphasized the need to carry out intensive advance political work among

To Fight and/or Not to Fight

The party, then, while working to promote the mass struggle for vital economic, political and democratic demands, is at the same time calling for arming the masses. It advocates people's self-defense groups to resist the violence and terror of the regime [and] the setting up of the first armed groups of peasants with a view to gradually building a guerrilla movement on a nationwide scale. . . .

We must take a resolute stand against, and rout, all the adventuristic trends of toying with guerrilla warfare and insurrection.

—Gustavo Corvalan, candidate member of the Central Committee of the Paraguayan CP, *World Marxist Review*, September 1967, p. 73.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the peasants in regions where a guerrilla war is to be launched. They completely repudiate the "foco" theory of Guevara, Debray and others.

Future Prospects

It is hazardous to predict the future of the rival Latin American Communist camps. However, there are a number of factors that will obviously have an important bearing on their prospects in the foreseeable future.

First, it is clear that in virtually all the countries of Latin America (excluding Cuba) no Communist Party—of whatever brand—is at present a real threat to the government in power. Of the pro-Soviet Communist parties, only that of Chile can, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as a major party. There is an outside chance that a coalition including the Communists might come to power in Chile as a result of the elections scheduled for September 1970, but this is extremely unlikely, and Chile is the only Latin American country in which such a development is even a remote possibility.

Secondly, the Maoist Communists are of little importance anywhere in Latin America. Although Peking has been able to recruit followers in at least ten countries, nowhere have they been able to establish a party capable of making a serious bid for power—or even of acquiring major influence in the labor or peasant movement.

Thirdly, although the guerrilla road to power has so far not been successful as a Communist tactic in any Latin American country, this strategy is not to be completely ruled out. Its efficacy will depend upon the attitudes and policies of the governments of the various Latin American countries. There are unfortunately some countries where conditions appear to be such as to offer a favorable environment for a guerrilla war under Communist leadership. This may be because the ruling economic group is so extremely conservative that it will not permit any kind of social reform, even a moderate income tax, creating a situation in which the hope of democratic reform by peaceful means may be abandoned even by those who believe most strongly in it. Or it may be the case where an authoritarian military regime has increasingly isolated itself from the civilian population and has all but eliminated the possibilities of legitimate and peaceful opposition, thus driving even those who would normally abhor violence to support the elements which preach the strategy of revolutionary guerrilla warfare.

Fourthly, the guerrilla groups are evolving new tactics of violence which could pose a serious threat to some Latin American governments. With the failure of the rural guerrillas, urban terrorism has become an increasingly popular weapon of the extremist groups. Assassinations, kidnapings, bank robberies, and other forms of terrorism can disorient and discredit the government in power, unless it enjoys really broad and firm support among the population at large. The failure of such terrorist tactics in Venezuela in 1962-63 was mainly due to the fact that the regime *did* have the backing of the great majority of the population.

Fifthly, the appearance of left-wing military governments—a relatively new phenomenon which seems to be spreading on the continent—may present new opportunities to Communist groups, especially of the pro-Moscow variety. If the new military leaders should prove to be politically unsophisticated, they might well enter into collaboration with the Communists, thus opening new areas of influence to the latter. On the other hand, it seems quite likely that the socialist orientation and economic nationalism of the military leaders may tend to draw away support from the Communists, particularly among the young.

Sixthly, it seems unlikely that any Communist regime—of whatever brand—that might come to power by violence could stay in power very long without the support of the Soviet Union. Hence, the policy of the USSR with regard to backing other Castros in Latin America will be a key factor in determining the future prospects of Communist movements in the hemisphere.

Finally, the attitude of the United States is bound to be of crucial importance in determining these prospects. The experience of the last decade points to the conclusion that the best "preventive measure" against the growth of Communist influence in Latin America lies in the fulfillment of the aspirations of the Latin American masses for fundamental social reform, for rising levels of living, and for political freedom. To the degree that the United States effectively supports programs and policies designed to secure these objectives, it will be making the greatest possible contribution to thwarting the advance of communism in the area. To the extent that it might rely only on preserving the status quo, it could well contribute to the further advance of communism, of one variety or another, in the Latin American republics.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Red and the Black

JOHN GERASSI, Ed.: *Venceremos! The Speeches and Writings of Ernesto Che Guevara.* New York, Macmillan, 1968.

JOHN CLYTUS: *Black Man in Red Cuba.* Coral Gables, University of Miami Press, 1970.

ELIZABETH SUTHERLAND: *The Youngest Revolution: A Personal Report on Cuba.* New York, Dial Press, 1969.

Reviewed by William J. Parente

THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE of the Cuban Revolution in coming to grips with the historic problem of race relations has significance throughout the hemisphere. As North American educators can testify, the attraction of Communist Cuba as a "new" society is very great for an increasing number of college-age radicals. Unlike all other Communist states, Cuba is a truly multiracial country, with a black population numbering between 35 and 45 percent of the total. As one Cuban haughtily puts it in the Sutherland volume, ". . . the Cuban Revolution is the only one worth watching right now except for China—and Cuba is even more interesting than China because the population is more racially mixed."

The racial situation in Cuba, then, approaches the dimensions of that in the United States and other American republics. Friend and foe alike must inevitably ask whether the Cuban form of socialism can significantly improve race relations. Similarly, it is apparent that the militant revolutionary strategy for Latin America espoused by the Cuban regime and personified by Che Guevara continues to stress racial inequality as a fundamental justification for rebellion, and its elimination as a primary goal of any new revolutionary government. The three books reviewed here shed considerable light both upon the nature of this militant racial propaganda and upon the Castro regime's efforts to resolve Cuba's own racial problem.

AS EARLY AS 1921, the newly-established Soviet journal on nationality problems, *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, foresaw that the collapse of colonial empires would serve to "arouse nationalist passions among the peoples of the yellow and dark continents even more than the defeat of the Entente's counter-revolutionary plans against Soviet Russia." Indeed, the author—M. Pavlovich—specifically urged ". . . the awakening of the dark tribes of the Sudan, South Africa, and South America." [1]

It was Castro's Second Declaration of Havana (February 4, 1962) which most effectively raised this theme again—and this time from within the American hemisphere. In attacking the "neo-

[1] No. 14 (112), July 16, 1921, p. 1.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

colonialist" Alliance for Progress, Castro related it to the racism which had decimated the "32 million Indians, who extend from the United States border to the limits of the southern hemisphere, and the 45 million mestizos, who for the most part differ little from the Indians." To these victims of racial oppression he added "the 15 million Negroes and 14 million mulattos of Latin America, who know with horror and rage that their brothers in the North cannot ride in the same vehicles as their white compatriots, nor attend the same schools, nor even die in the same hospitals." He concluded by asking:

How are these disinherited racial groups going to believe in this imperialism, in its benefits, or in any "alliance" with it (which is not for lynching and exploiting them as slaves)? What Alliance for Progress can serve as encouragement to those 107 million men and women of our America, the backbone of labor in the cities and fields, whose dark skin—black, mestizo, mulatto, Indian—inspires scorn in the new colonialists? [2]

Among the virtues of John Gerassi's exceptionally well-annotated collection is the light it sheds on Che Guevara's contribution to the formulation of this aggressively militant racial propaganda of the new Havana regime. Indeed, as early as August 1961, six months before Castro's address, we find Guevara, in a speech delivered at the Punta del Este conference of the Organization of American States (OAS), linking a denunciation of President Kennedy's proposed Alliance for Progress with con-

[2] *The Militant* (New York), March 5, 1962.

Reviewers in this Issue

WILLIAM J. PARENTE—Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Dr. Parente is a frequent contributor to this journal.

KARL M. SCHMITT—Associate Director of the Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas. He co-authored *The Politics of Violence: Revolution in the Modern World* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1968), and the forthcoming *The Politics of Assassination* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall).

ARPAD J. VON LAZAR—Associate Professor at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He is co-author of *Reform and Revolution: Readings in Latin American Politics* (Boston, Allyn Bacon, 1970) and author of *Latin American Politics: A Primer* (Boston, Allyn Bacon) to be published this year.

VICTOR ALBA—Lecturer at Kent State University in Ohio. His most recent books are *The Latin Americans* (New York, Praeger, 1969) and *Politics and the Labor Movement in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif. Stanford University Press, 1968).

JAMES W. ROWE—Research Associate in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution. Formerly a correspondent for the American Universities Field Staff in Brazil, he has contributed to numerous magazines and books.

JAIME SUCHLICKI—Assistant Professor, Department of History, and Research Assistant at the Center for Advanced International Studies at the University of Miami. His *The Cuban Revolution: A Documentary Guide* is to be published by the University of Miami Press later this year.

KEMPTON B. JENKINS—Assistant Director of the U.S. Information Agency for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He has served in both Venezuela and the USSR.

CARMELO MESA-LAGO—Acting Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. His most recent book was *The Labor Sector and Socialist Distribution in Cuba* (New York, F.A. Praeger—Hoover Institution, 1968).

JOHN N. PLANK—Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. He edited *Cuba and the United States: Long-Range Perspectives* (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, 1967).

WILLIAM E. RATLIFF—Research Associate at the HOOVER Institution, Stanford, Calif.; contributor, *Hispanic-American Historical Review* and *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demnation of "the existence of discrimination against the Negro and the excesses of the Ku Klux Klan" in the United States. He also charged that the technical development plans of the OAS's Economic and Social Committee were racist and colonialist because—unlike the Cuban model—they stressed health facilities before industrialization:

I get the impression that what is intended is to make the outhouse a fundamental thing. This improves the social condition of the poor Indian, the poor Negro, the poor man who leads a subhuman existence. "Let's build him an outhouse and then, after we build him an outhouse, and after he is educated to keep it clean, then he can enjoy the benefits of production."

As in the case of the Peace Corps later, American foreign policy was damned if it did help, and damned if it didn't, and the exacerbation of racial sensitivities was from the beginning part and parcel of the Cuban response.

The Guevara collection is of interest, too, for its frequent exhortations urging elimination of racial discrimination within Cuba itself. However, with regard to the progress—or lack of it—being made by the Castro regime in this direction, the other two volumes under review are of greater value because they provide independent reports, from widely differing perspectives, by foreigners familiar with both the old and the new Cuba.

JOHN CLYTUS is an American black nationalist who spent three years in Cuba from 1964 to 1967. Having served in the United States armed forces and experienced racial discrimination in our society, Clytus first worked unsuccessfully for the election of a "Communist [Independent Progressive Party] candidate in San Francisco" and then left for Cuba to see if communism had solved the race problem there. Since he had not been invited, his reception was not warm, although he eventually secured work as a teacher of English to clerks in the Ministry of Foreign Commerce and as a translator for *Granma*, the party newspaper.

Clytus reports that he soon discovered the absence of blacks in leadership roles not only in the government bureaucracy, but also in the party—a point confirmed by Sutherland:

. . . not only were the minister and the vice-minister of the ministry [of Foreign Commerce] white, but so were all of the supervisors in all of the offices. It didn't take much longer to find that out of the seventeen or more ministries in the country, the top two jobs in each were held by whites.

Similarly, although *Granma* gave the greatest prominence to stories of racial unrest in the United States, Clytus found that this and other journals effectively censored any effort by the black third of the Cuban population to create a sense of separate black identity. Eventually, his faith and interest in the Cuban experiment foundered on this traditional Communist attitude. "Communism, with its benevolent method of ending the racial problem by condensing all races into one-big-happy-human-race," he writes, "would ring down the final curtain on black consciousness." Clytus explains his return to the United States on the ground that here at least he can protest publicly against racial injustice and openly advocate black nationalist aspirations. (The Cuban Communist attitude observed by Clytus recalls Soviet Africanist I. I. Potekhin's strictures against the "negritude" concepts of Senegalese President Leopold Senghor and Pan-Africanist attitudes generally:[3])

ELIZABETH SUTHERLAND (MARTINEZ) is a journalist whose articles have appeared in *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and *The Guardian*. As this might suggest, her attitude towards the socialist experiment in Cuba is sympathetic, but it is not uncritical, nor is her book lacking in candor on the racial question. The volume is actually a remarkable documentary of political conversations which the author had with Cubans of all classes during a visit to the island in 1967. As a visiting journalist, she had access to Cuban intellectual circles—something denied to Clytus for the most part. As a result, her coverage of the island's race situation is considerably more complex and sophisticated than his.

Herself a mulatto, she is as sensitive as Clytus to the racial epithets that persist among the Cuban lower and middle classes. She also notes the lack of black faces in magazines and the general refusal of Cuban society—both black and white—to accept negroid features or black cultural values as the equal of their traditional white European counterparts. But she is a realist with respect to the rate at which progress towards racial equality can be achieved—even in a socialist society. For her, the important distinction is that "where the previous society's institutions and authority had all stood

[3] *Kommunist* (Moscow), No. 19, October–December 1964, pp. 36–48.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

behind racism, the [Cuban] Revolution stood against it."

There have clearly been problems. Three days after Castro's historic declaration of March 22, 1959, on "The Rights of the Black Man in Cuba," he was forced to go on television to put down rumors of interracial marriage and "to pressure people that the Revolution wasn't going to tell anybody whom to dance with."

Miss Sutherland acknowledges that "white supremacy, another old idea rooted in Cuba's past society, is probably the most delicate and muddled issue that can be raised about the island today." Here we do not find the rash claims heard in foreign socialist circles that the Cuban race problem has been solved.[4] The 1931 census showed that although Cubans of color constituted well over a third of the population, they owned only eight percent of the total land in terms of money value. The social as well as economic results of such disparity could hardly be removed by *any* regime in a single generation.

There have also been achievements, however. Illiteracy, traditionally high among the black population of Cuba, was reduced to less than four percent in the early years of the regime. Housing, also a problem for blacks, was given priority second only to industrialization. The immediate integration of schools has already produced thousands of black technicians and bureaucrats who eventually can move into higher positions—provided both the regime and the people have the will to make it so. The public forms of racial discrimination—segregated beaches, restaurants, hotels—have been eliminated by government decree. In many ways these forward steps have coincided both chronologically and tactically with the struggle against racial discrimination in the United States. The difference in Cuba lies in the regime's policy of nationalization, the lack of intervening state, local and private agencies to temporarily frustrate the will of the national government (for example, in school or union policies), and a more focussed national will than in our own system of checks and balances.

[4] *Cf.* Harry Ring, *How Cuba Uprooted Race Discrimination*, New York, Pioneer Publishers, 1961.

APART FROM THE QUESTION of public policy, the less tractable attitudes of the Cuban people at large with regard to the race problem are also similar to those prevailing in the United States. Miss Sutherland writes:

Of the many old ideas embedded in that prerevolutionary scene, those which in 1967 seemed hardest and most vital to solve fell into three areas of human relationship: class, race, and sex. Outside these broad categories lay many prejudices which were primarily by-products of, rather than rooted directly in, the past structure of Cuba's society. . . . But old ideas in the area of class, race and sex relations—these seemed to present the Revolution with its most difficult and long-range challenges.

"How, in the case of Cuba," the author asks, "can you change men's attitudes toward women, women's attitudes toward themselves, white attitudes toward blacks, and black attitudes toward blackness? How, in short, do you change what is commonly called 'human nature'?"

These are fair questions—and they are questions which non-Communist societies also may well ask themselves.

At the conclusion of her lengthy section on Cuban blacks ("Colony Within the Colony"), Miss Sutherland quotes from a statement adopted by 1400 intellectuals for the 1968 Cultural Congress in Havana. The statement acknowledges that "racism is not, historically, a product of modern imperialism; it is an ideological vestige of the past that imperialism inherited and shaped to its own ends of domination and exploitation, turning it into an essential part of its own system to such an extent that a prior condition for the disappearance of racism is the disappearance of imperialism."

Such a statement reflects a more sophisticated analysis than earlier Communist theory, which saw capitalism as the creator of racism. It must be said that there is much in Sutherland's report, as well as in the Clytus volume, which suggests that the problem of race is indeed rooted in "human nature" rather than in either capitalism or imperialism—unless one chooses to interpret the latter term as including the broadest kinds of human domination over other humans. To the extent that this is what is meant by "imperialism," then indeed, American and Communist policy may be said to be "converging" in a mutual struggle against racial discrimination in their societies.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Old Doctrines and New Classes

R. A. HUMPHREYS, Ed.: *Tradition and Revolt in Latin America and Other Essays.*
New York, Columbia University Press, 1969.

LUIS E. AGUILAR, Ed.: *Marxism in Latin America.*
New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1968.

LUIS MERCIER VEGA: *Roads to Power in Latin America.*
New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1969.

Reviewed by Karl M. Schmitt

DESPITE THE APPARENT commonality of subject matter suggested by their titles, these works range from historical observations of mixed merit to incisive analyses of contemporary Latin American social and political phenomena. The first is a collection of previously published historical articles and essays by the "dean" of Latin American historians in Great Britain; the second is a collection of documentary materials on communism and socialism from the late 19th century to the present, with an introduction by the editor; and the third is a series of essays or, perhaps more accurately, an extended essay on social relationships in contemporary Latin America and their implications for politics and government.

For those primarily interested in power relationships, ideology, and the "revolution" in Latin America today, the Humphreys collection has little to offer. The scholarly core of the work consists of four articles on British commerce and Anglo-American rivalries, largely in the Caribbean, during the 19th century. These are solidly researched and well-written pieces on some little-known aspects (at least in the United States) of British interest in Latin America. The rest, however, contribute little to historical scholarship, although they include two charming essays on early historians of Latin America—the Scotsman William Robertson and the American William Prescott. The primary reason for the republication of these essays, apparently, was the desire of the Institute of Latin American Studies of Columbia University to pay homage to this distinguished British historian. It has done so handsomely.

OF MUCH GREATER contemporary interest is Mr. Aguilar's collection of Marxist writings from and about Latin America from the 1890's to the late 1960's. For the most part, they consist of speeches and essays authored by Communist party members or documents of party conferences (including some emanating from Fidel Castro's Cuban Communist Party), but they also include some writings by independent Marxists and Socialists. The editor has divided his 36 selections into six sections, all but the last of which cover well-defined chronological periods such as the Popular Front era and the aftermath of Castro's Cuban revolution. The last section Aguilar has dubbed "Criticism and Self-Criticism." Although a certain repetitive sameness runs through many of the pieces, particularly those from groups that took their directions faithfully from the Soviet Union, the chronological treatment serves to bring into focus the interesting shifts in the posture of Latin American Communists. Even more interesting and important, perhaps, are the writings of Marxist deviationists—Jose Carlos Mariategui of Peru, Anibal Ponce of Argentina, and Jose Revueltas of Mexico.

The editor's introduction is indispensable for the purpose of tying these various selections to-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gether and giving continuity to the volume. This reviewer would take serious exception to Aguilar only on his statement that "up to 1945 . . . the basic and virtually exclusive nucleus of Marxism in Latin America was formed by the Communist Parties." This may be true in the organizational sense, but it ignores the whole range of Marxist thought that influenced Mexican political, social, and economic development during the 1920's and 1930's. It also ignores the strong currents of Marxist ideology that inspired the early Apristas of Peru, as well as the Marxist ideas that permeated intellectual life almost everywhere in Latin America, particularly in the universities. Castro himself came out of an intellectual environment in which Marxist terminology was common currency. This underscores the fact that a complete history of Marxism in Latin America remains to be written, but Mr. Aguilar's collection represents an excellent beginning, and it is to be hoped that he will continue his fruitful research in this field.

MERCIER VEGA'S WORK is something else again —at times maddening, but always stimulating and thought-provoking. The author, a Frenchman whose mother was Chilean, brings a different perspective and a certain freshness of critique that would probably be hard for a "norteamericano" to achieve. His criticisms of Latin American societies are sharp and biting. He has no illusions whatever about the present elites in Latin America, be they landholders, the new industrialists, or members of that amorphous social grouping called the middle class or the middle strata. But neither does he expect the Left, whether old-line Communists or new-style guerrilla and urban revolutionaries, to carry out the basic changes in Latin American society that he deems necessary. Rather he places his hopes in what he calls "the new political class"—the managers, technical experts, and organizers.

In part, this is an act of faith, but in part it is also an act of rational judgment in that Mercier Vega sees Latin America producing more of these types of persons than the present socioeconomic structures can absorb. When the crisis of these *tecnicos* becomes severe enough, he believes, they will become motivated to pursue power in order to change society so as to accommodate their interests. To examine this thesis adequately would require more space than is available in this review. Suffice it to say that the reviewer has serious reservations concerning this prediction.

To consider some other aspects of the book, Mercier Vega starts out from a discussion of the term "class" as applied to Latin America. Not only does he attack the term "middle class" (as many US writers have already done), but he also questions the validity of the concepts of "working class," "peasantry," and "capitalists" in their European or North American sense. He rightly observes that in Latin America these groups (including even the real peasantry) are small and lack a conscious sense of group identity or coherence. Therefore, he argues, Latin American societies should be viewed not in terms of clearly-defined classes or interest groups, but rather in terms of patrons and clients, with various groups of patrons struggling to control the state. He goes on to say:

Latin American societies are made up of disunited castes, clans, and classes. They are conglomerates, not communities; the strata that enter into their composition have their origins at different periods of time; they have not been eliminated or fused by evolution, they are juxtaposed. Hence the need for a personal arbiter, be he president, *caudillo* or dictator. Hence, also, the difficulty of finding a system of rules and laws that would be . . . respected by the population as a whole.

Concerned with the problem of breaking up this traditional structure (which he sees as impeding economic growth and healthy social relations), the author next addresses himself to the ideological foundations of the groups that advocate change. He argues that these foundations, though basically imported, have undergone substantial modification in Latin America, and that the proponents of change, whether Marxists, Christian Democrats, or Fascists, all subscribe to a common set of principles: (1) rejection of the traditional forms of Latin American society, expressing itself in "anti-feudal, anti-oligarchic, or anti-imperialist slogans"; (2) the need to create a nation; (3) a decisive role for the state in social and economic terms; (4) the need for the emergence of a new social class capable of accomplishing the tasks of reconstruction; and (5) the achievement of power by this new class with the support of mass movements.

While he seems to sympathize with these aspirations, the author has little but contempt for the groups that mouth the slogans. Except for some segments of the Christian Democrats, he exhibits a deep and bitter cynicism toward the parties presently aspiring to power, believing that for the most part they have no intention of changing the basic social pattern of patron and client. In fact, he argues that the existing political organizations con-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tinue to operate according to that pattern: students, after graduation, fight their way into the system to become patrons themselves; and even organized labor struggles to defend a system that guarantees it a modicum of benefits and privileges.

One of the author's most interesting chapters is one that discusses particular problems in selected countries, but it also illustrates the most frustrating aspect of the book, which is the insufficiency of evidence provided to support the author's generalizations. One suspects that Mercier Vega is basically correct in his analysis of Latin Amercian society, even if one cannot accept all of the solutions he proposes and the predictions he makes. However, the author has yet to supply adequate hard data to substantiate his positions.

The Obstacles to Reform

JAMES PETRAS: *Politics and Social Forces in Chilean Development.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969.

CLAUDIO VELIZ, Ed.: *Obstacles to Change in Latin America.* London, Oxford University Press, 1966.

CARL LEIDEN and KARL M. SCHMITT: *The Politics of Violence: Revolution in the Modern World.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1968.

Reviewed by Arpad J. von Lazar

TALKING ABOUT THE precarious nature of social and political stability in the countries of the less developed world is like incanting a Tibetan prayer: it ought to, and even might, have an effect on the faithful, but, alas, it may also be only an elaboration of the obvious! Social science literature must by now be saturated with studies of economic backwardness, social stagnation, and political decay in the countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The present three volumes demonstrate that economic development may, and probably should, cure these ills, *if* (and only if) the political and social system also manages to keep pace with change.

Both the Veliz volume and Professor Petras' excellent Chilean case study recognize that Latin American political systems generally include only a portion of the populace; that political participation is marginal at best for the vast masses of urban and rural poor, that income distribution is not equitable; and, above all, that efforts at solving these problems have been only partially, if at all, successful.

Professor Petras' presentation shows a rather clear-cut ideological bias, though this may actually be to the good. The neo-Marxian tone helps to place the discussion of reform management in its "natural garb"—it is like reading a well-written work by a Chilean deeply concerned about his country's posture in the developmental process. If this is the price to be paid for getting a highly "relevant" internal view of Chilean development, we should be willing to accept the ideological coloring.

The Petras work is at its best in dealing with the problems of rural social mobilization and the role of the bureaucracy in national politics. Chile's agrarian reform, which has been praised as one of the most fundamental of such programs in Latin American, receives a realistic and extremely perceptive treatment here. Agrarian reform is really meaningless unless supplemented by social changes and reforms designed to bring the *campesino* out of his state of social isolation, political serfdom, and cultural deprivation. And as any good Jesuit or Leninist would contend, the organizational

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

weapon is the key to change. This is why Petras' treatment of rural social change is so significant in its approach and relevant in its focus. He stresses *campesino* unionization as the key element in providing the peasantry with a social and political club to wield in the highly competitive and much "overheated" Latin American setting where political power and social weight are still a monopoly of those in the middle and upper-middle classes.

What seems questionable in Petras' work is his relatively optimistic view that a kind of "new politics" (new in style and content) is emerging, together with new groups wielding political power and influence. If anything, in this reviewer's opinion, Chile provides proof of the estimate that while some degree of change *is* taking place, the limits of reform movements in Latin America are clearly set, and drastic and far-reaching changes are hard to imagine at this stage. For some, this conclusion may come with the realization that the masses of Latin America are *not* "on the move;" for others, with recognition that in contemporary Latin American politics, especially of the reformist or revolutionary kind, lofty ideals continue to be sacrificed, more often than not, to expediency.

IT IS PRECISELY these points which are brought into sharp focus by the Veliz volume. The book sheds essential light on the depth of the problems and dilemmas the Latin American peoples face in attempting to cast off the shackles of economic stagnation and social backwardness. It is, indeed, a monumental task for a semi-industrialized, capitalistic system built on the remnants of feudalism to shift to a reform orientation and still manage "to keep the lid on." Most of the contributors to the volume tacitly recognize that the problems are huge, and the solutions put forward acceptable, thus far, only to certain sectors of the body politic. Still, the contributions of the Argentine sociologist Di Tella (on populism and reform), of the Chilean economist Sunkel (on frustration and reform in Chile), and of the Colombian sociologist Fals Borda (on violence and the breakup of tradition in Colombia) are modestly optimistic in tone and action-oriented in what they recommend. They all advocate change—indeed, a degree of change that would have revolutionary implications for the traditional social order—but at the same time they are reluctant to advocate the cheap solutions and easy answers so characteristic of Latin American political extremism. The clarity of thought and intellectual forthrightness of the authors place this volume among the most important contributions to the discussion of the developmental options and priorities facing the Latin American countries in the coming crucial years.

BOTH THE VELIZ AND PETRAS' works skirt the issue of violence and the role of violent revolutionary action in the Latin American setting. But, as social needs, economic demands, and political frustrations grow, so does the potential for the violent expression of popular disaffection and consequent political repression by those in power. The Leiden and Schmitt volume thus performs a useful service in attempting a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of revolutionary action and its relationship to political ideologies. In order to integrate their conceptual treatment with the historical experience of the 20th century, the authors discuss the Mexican, Turkish, Egyptian, and Cuban revolutions.

While the authors' presentation of events is quite sound, the reader has the feeling of sinking into a morass of historical specificity. This is not to suggest that the particulars of time, circumstance, cultural background, and "acts of God" are less important than the factors influencing the economic system and its functioning, or the patterns of social stratification or mobility. The point is that the elitist nature of some revolutions tends to obscure —or at least diminish our awareness of—everyday political actions of a revolutionary nature occurring, so to speak, under our very eyes. The magnetic and explosive role played by the charismatic leader is unquestionable; but so is the fact that the organizational ability and numerical strength of community-level political and economic institutions are beginning more and more to replace the glamour as well as the social irresponsibility of revolutionary intellectuals with their ideological dreams of societal perfection. So it is really the first part of this book, which deals conceptually with the problems of revolutionary action, that has the most to offer. The case studies are something of a letdown with their brief and simplistic presentations and their attempts to find convenient explanations for purposes of categorization.

HAVING READ THESE THREE fine volumes, one is left with an impression of social paralysis coupled with a sense of the extreme urgency of effecting

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

changes that will ensure that the lessons of history do not go unheeded in Latin America. But what are these lessons, and what do they suggest to us with respect to the allocation of priorities, preferences, and effort within the limited time available? We are all aware of the price that is paid for the inequities in income, social status, and access to political participation characteristic of all less-developed countries—the more so because we now see the effects of these persistent ills even within our own society.

Controversy continues over means and ends, over methods and techniques, over goals and the manipulation of priorities, and so does uncertainty concerning the efficacy of reformist solutions and the relevance of revolutionary action. Meanwhile, slow changes, yet of vast import, *are* taking place in the social orders, economies, and political practices and institutions of many countries of Latin America and the world. Let us hope that none will act according to the Savoyard proverb, "I have so much to do, I am going to sleep."

The Import of Ideologies

ANDRE GUNTER FRANK: *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution.*
New York, Monthly Review, 1969.

CARLOS A. ASTIZ, ED.: *Latin American International Politics.*
South Bend, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1969.

PAUL D. BETHEL: *The Losers.*
New Rochelle, N.Y., Arlington House, 1969.

GASTON GARCIA CANTU: *El socialismo en Mexico, Siglo XIX.*
Mexico City, Ediciones Eray, 1969.

RODOLFO STAVENHAGEN: *Las clases sociales en las societadas agrarias.*
Mexico City, Siglo XXI, 1969.

MARIA ISAURA PEREIRA DE QUEIROZ: *Historia y etnologia de los movimientos mesianicos.*
Mexico City, Siglo XXI, 1969.

R.A. SOSA FERREYRO: *El crimen del miedo.*
Mexico City, B. Costa-Amic, 1969.

MANUEL MAGAÑA C.: *Poder laico.*
Mexico City, Foro Politico, 1970.

Reviewed by Victor Alba

THROUGHOUT ITS MODERN HISTORY, Latin America has suffered from a peculiar handicap: its political historians and theorists have interpreted the contemporary Latin American scene on the basis of imported theories originating in societies quite different from those of Latin America. The Spaniards and Portuguese brought with them their own institutions and political and social concepts, although they—particularly the Spaniards—showed great flexibility in applying them. The Latins' ideal of independence was based on French rationalism; the political structure on the American model; and the political economy on a mixture of Spanish conservatism, British economic liberalism, French and Spanish political liberalism, and finally Gallic positivism. Perhaps the best explanation for the failure of socialism and anarcho-syndicalism to gain any strong and lasting foothold in Latin America lies in the fact that their exponents tried to transplant ideologies born in a European setting onto Latin American soil with scarcely any attempt to adapt them to local realities. Between the two World

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wars and for a time after World War II, populism was the sole political philosophy that tried to look at Latin America through Latin American eyes.

The sterility of communism in Latin America may be attributed, among other things, to what may be termed its ideological colonialism. Moscow treated the Latin American countries as "semi-colonial" and prescribed tactics which the local Communist parties slavishly applied, thereby isolating themselves from the masses—in fact, from everyone except a limited audience of intellectuals and students. Even now the orthodox Communists submissively apply models prescribed by Moscow.

Dissident Marxist groups in Latin America today —be they Maoists, Neo-Marxists, Castroites, or Trotskyites of various shadings—make the same mistake of applying foreign models, drawn in this case principally from the writings of the French and American New Left. The result is again the complete self-isolation of the Latin American New Left and the existence of a profound contradiction between the dissidents' theories and their practice (or *praxis*, as it is stylishly termed in servile emulation of Marx's phraseology).

An example of this importation of ideas and the application of schematic interpretations is to be found in the writings of André Gunter Frank, a German educated in the United States. Frank is an influential economic theoretician among the Latin American New Left, whose books significantly influence the way in which the movement views the contemporary Latin American scene. The fundamental thesis of Frank and the New Left is that Latin American societies are characterized by the existence of a bourgeoisie grafted onto a land-holding oligarchy (a thesis supported by the Populists) and at the same time by the existence of a local capitalism linked with, but also rivaling, American capitalism. Latin American Communists pin their hopes on this rivalry to lead to the emergence of national liberation movements supported by what they used to call the "national bourgeoisie" and now refer to as "national capitalism." The New Left, on the other hand, seeks to destroy this national capitalism, and in so doing it virtually ignores the landed oligarchies. But when military regimes calling themselves "revolutionary" appear and pretend to be carrying out what Marxists would call a bourgeois, anti-feudal revolution, the New Left supports them without any apparent effort to reconcile the supposed existence of a national capitalism (as distinct from the bourgeoisie) and the "revolutionary" military elements' assertion of the need to carry out a revolution in order to bring such a national capitalism into being. The nationalistic aspect of such revolutions seemingly blinds them to this contradiction.

Frank's essays, now collected in one volume, appear scholarly and serious, and they may be convincing to anyone lacking a broad, firsthand knowledge of actual Latin American conditions. But Latin Americans themselves—including even those who subscribe to Frank's general interpretation—find themselves forced to recognize that one aspect or another of his thesis flies in the face of realities.

In fact, all the books under review—various of which were written by members of the New Left—describe phenomena which are characteristic, not of a capitalist system, but rather of landholding oligarchies with bourgeois enclaves. Whether it is Garcia Cantu's study of the development of socialism in Mexico in the last century, Magaña's examination of the progressivist whims of the Mexican Church, Stavenhagen's description of the agrarian population of Latin America, Pereira de Queiroz' analysis of the Messianic movements in Brazil, or Sosa Ferreyro's treatment of the assassination of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, the leader of Mexico's only socialist movement—all help to form a picture of oligarchic societies with little trace of real capitalism. It could even be said that the international policies of the Latin American countries, as described in the collection of studies compiled by Argentine Professor Astiz, are typical of regimes serving the interests of landowning oligarchies rather than those of capitalism (although these studies generally fail to address themselves to the social realities underlying any diplomacy).

By the same token, the measures adopted by Castro's regime to consolidate its power—analyzed by Bethel—are no more characteristic of a socialist regime, however much it may try to imitate certain Stalinist models and clothe its actions in revolutionary rhetoric. They are essentially measures which have been practiced, in a less spectacular manner perhaps, by other Latin American dictatorships of the traditional oligarchic type before Castro's advent to power.

All this is important, not as a mere exercise in semantics, but as a key to political tactics. Action on the political level depends largely on the assessment of fundamental social realities that prompts it. Perhaps a major cause of the political sterility of the New Left in Latin America is to be found in its tendency to rely, as pointed out above, on imported interpretations of reality.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews in Brief

Adeste Fidelistas

IRVING L. HOROWITZ, JOSUE DE CASTRO, and JOHN GERASSI, Eds.: *Latin American Radicalism. A Documentary Report on Left and Nationalist Movements.* New York, Random House, 1969.

PRIMARY SOURCE materials on Latin American radical and nationalist movements are not readily accessible to general readers in the United States, and to the extent that the present volume helps fill this void it is a welcome contribution. Irving Louis Horowitz, sociologist and editor of *Trans-Action*, and John Gerassi, an angry ex-journalist turned militant, join with Josue de Castro, the Brazilian nutritionist, in presenting twenty-eight essays (including four of their own) which describe, defend, or promote the tenets of a wide spectrum of anti-Establishment or anti-*yanqui* postures in contemporary Latin America.

How to treat the range and variety of the contributions is a dilemma not fully overcome by the editors, who are "linked by an acceptance of broad radical premises for the hemisphere" but disclaim the need for "a unified, systematic approach" in a documentary. The inclusion of interpretative commentaries on the Latin American Left, such as that by Professor John Johnson of Stanford (as well as those of the editors themselves), and the juxtaposition of the moderate, scholarly reflections of Prebisch, Rosenstein-Rodan, Furtado, and Germani alongside the apocalyptic cadences of Castro, Che Guevara, Régis Debray, and Fabricio Ojeda make the volume more an anthology than a documentary.

Coherence is also weakened by the effort to examine both "nationalist" and "left" doctrines in the same work. Despite considerable overlap, particularly as they perceive the United States' role in Latin America's malaise, the doctrines of Latin American radicalism —whether "classic" or New Left—frequently diverge from the broader tradition of nationalism, which today still ranges all the way from remnants of esthetic and Hispanic anti-Americanism, through the lingering protectionist apologias of middle-class native industrialists, to the programs of the Peruvian military. The organization of the book around three "pivots" (socio-economic, nationalistic, and political-activist) does little to clarify concepts or dispel the potpourri flavor.

Highly valuable inclusions are Rodolfo Stavenhagen's attack on seven familiar intellectual-liberal myths about Latin American society; Merle Kling's detached examination of the place of violence in politics; Emilio Maspero's spirited defense of Christian trade-unionism; an important exposition of Helio Jaguaribe's "developmentalist-nationalist" thesis; and personal testimonials by such revolutionaries as Father Camilo Torres, Guevara, and Ojeda. As for the editors' own contributions, Gerassi's firsthand account of the Latin American Solidarity Conference of 1967 is useful and enlightening, but the others are disappointing. De Castro's commentary is unpretentious and noncommittal in approaching the Great Issues of the Left, while Horowitz' analysis of "permanent illegitimacy" in Latin America does not measure up to the standards of his earlier work on military elites or international stratification. The unrelieved solemnity and righteous indignation pervading most of the selections in the book do scant justice to the flashes of wit and self-deprecation which have frequently been articulated in other writings or speeches of the militants—militants of a Left that is also Latin. Moreover, important as it is to an understanding of Latin America's New Left, the legacy of opportunism and occasional buffoonery left by the Orthodox Left—which led one wag to remark, "Latin American Marxists may not have done very well by Karl, but they kept the faith with Harpo"—is not touched upon.

There is no selection dealing with the ethics of revolution, despite interesting Latin American discussions of the dilemma posed by Camus: "Every revolutionary ends up being an oppressor or a heretic." Another major shortcoming is the absence of materials suggesting the fertility of the debate among left-nationalists on key concepts such as foreign investment, the role of the military, and levels of violence, or revealing the foibles of the Left on substantive and tactical matters. While the work obviously does not purport to present a balanced symposium, it would have been enlivened by the inclusion of items such as Osvaldo Peralva's accounts of the travails of Brazilian Communists in Moscow in the 1950's; the devastating critique of rural guerrilla theory by Debray's Marxist colleague, Henri Edme (in *Les Temps Modernes* [Paris], May 1966); the revisionist nationalism of Brazilian journalist Gilberto Paim; the tract on urban guerrilla tactics by Carlos Marighela; or the *Consensus of Vina del Mar.* The dimensions and timing of the book no doubt prevented the inclusion of some of these items, but perhaps a select bibliography should have been added in order to convey a better idea of the continuing variety and volatility of the dialogue on the Left.

James W. Rowe

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARTIN KENNER and JAMES PETRAS, Eds.: *Fidel Castro Speaks*. New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1969.

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION has been an inspiration to many, particularly the young, both in the United States and in Latin America. While its appeal has perhaps diminished with time, it still has a visible impact, for example, on the thinking of the New Left in the United States. For radical leftist groups, Castro's speeches are the fount from which revolutionary ideas flow. The duty of every revolutionary, therefore, is not only to make revolution but also to purify himself by bathing in Castro's baptismal stream.

It is doubtless for this reason that Martin Kenner, an activist in "The Movement" and a writer for the underground press, and James Petras, a professor of political science at Pennsylvania State University, have prepared this volume of Castro's speeches. They explain in their introduction that "particular aspects of the Cuban struggle, and Fidel's articulation of them, are of most interest to the youth [of the United States]—blacks, GIs and students—who are themselves in struggle."

In selecting the 16 speeches reprinted in the book, the editors evidently chose two particular themes in Castro's thought which they considered most appropriate to their audience: 1) the necessity for revolutionaries to create for themselves the necessary conditions for struggle rather than waiting for material conditions to sweep them into power; and 2) the vision of a Communist society and a "new socialist man." All the selections revolve around these two themes.

Mr. Kenner has supplied a short editorial note for each speech, but some of these notes are at best superficial and often misleading. Mr. Kenner explains, for example, that in the latter part of 1966 the Cuban revolutionary leadership shifted its support away from the official Communist parties in Latin America towards militant activist groups committed to armed guerrilla warfare. But he claims that this shift "involved an analysis of revolutionary strategy" (p. 146)—in other words, that the sole reason for Castro's shift was his estimate that armed struggle was the correct strategy to attain power. Yet, Castro's advocacy of armed struggle has fluctuated, depending on the balance between his own desire to control the Latin American revolutionary movement and his need to obtain concessions, particularly military and economic aid, from the Soviet Union to bolster Cuba's faltering economy, rather than on any estimate of the strategic situation. Perhaps the best evidence of this was provided by Castro's August 23, 1968, speech approving the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia—a speech not included in this volume. With Cuba in serious economic difficulties, Castro pragmatically endorsed the Soviet action, reduced his own commitment to armed struggle, and parroted the Soviet line in Latin America. However, the editors choose to ignore the complexity of Soviet-Cuban relations and do not even consider the possibility that Castro's policies in Latin America may have been largely influenced by his need to reach and preserve an accommodation with the Kremlin.

The book is particularly weakened by the editors' omission of any of Castro's speeches showing either a departure from his insistence on armed struggle or his subservience to the Soviet Union. The Fidel Castro that speaks in these pages is, therefore, a different Castro from the one that speaks today.

The editorial notes are further vitiated by outright errors of fact. For instance, on p. 107, the editors refer to the October 1962 missile crisis both as "the Caribbean crisis in the fall of 1964" and as "the Caribbean crisis in October 1963."

Despite these serious shortcomings, the book does make available for the first time in English some of Castro's significant speeches. Whether they will, as the editors apparently hope, become a guide for American revolutionaries is difficult to say. It is hard to believe that Castro's more recent actions, particularly his justification of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and his generally increased subservience to the Kremlin, as well as the soft-pedaling of his support for revolutionary movements elsewhere in Latin America, will commend his ideas to American youth. Those who idolize Castro fail to contrast his speeches with his actions. The young people, in particular, fail to see that the real Cuba emphasizes military service and the regimentation of daily life, glorifies work and discipline, and criticizes the young for "doing their own thing." They also fail to realize that the outcome of the revolutionary effort to which Cuban youth contributed so much has been not a freer, more liberal society, but rather the sort of authoritarianism that the leaders of the American extremist Left would like to impose.

Jaime Suchlicki

Venezuela's CP

ROBERT J. ALEXANDER: *The Communist Party of Venezuela*. Stanford, Calif., Hoover Institution Press, 1969.

THE AUTHOR of this latest volume in the Hoover Institution series on Comparative Communist Party Politics is the most prominent American writer on Venezuelan affairs and a respected expert, in particular, on the *Accion Democratica* movement and its founder, Romulo Betancourt. At the same time, the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) has had one of the most interesting histories of all the Latin American Communist movements, weathering almost a decade of military dictatorship and becoming deeply enmeshed in the ideological struggles involving Havana, Moscow, and Peking. The PCV also illustrates dramatically the conflict between the disciplinary requirements of international communism and the Latin personality characteristics so deeply ingrained in the body politic in South and Central America.

Given this combination of established expertise and a fascinating topic, one would expect a vital contribution to the study of Communist operations in a free society. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Alexander's book falls short of this expectation.

As a factual primer on the history of the PCV, the study benefits from the author's unique appreciation of the Venezuelan scene and his perception of the struggle of fragile democratic movements in Latin America, and it should provide a handy reference for students of Venezuelan affairs. On the other hand, it offers only shallow insight into the interaction between the PCV and international Communist developments. The dramatic splits within the Venezuelan Communist movement are readily accessible to public view and shed

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

important light on the Sino-Soviet dispute as well as on Moscow's problems with Castro. Alexander barely touches on these questions and—beyond quoting at length from documents of the Venezuelan government police (*Dipegol*)—fails to discuss the blatant Cuban attempt to intervene directly with men, money, and arms in support of the unsuccessful Castroite guerrilla movement in Venezuela.

Soviet support of the PCV's armed-struggle tactics both in their original phase and in the later stage of Cuban domination is repeatedly questioned by Alexander. Yet the facts reveal Soviet complicity in both instances. Police arrests of terrorist units in Caracas uncovered a number of professional international Communist operatives (including several Spanish technicians from the staff of the notorious Soviet expert, General Lister, who was training subversives in Cuba). Soviet complicity was also evident in the Beltramini affair, which Alexander naively attributes solely to the Italian Communist Party.*

Mr. Alexander is also not entirely correct in claiming that the PCV has lost its influence among professional organizations as a result of its unsuccessful resort to armed struggle. The party still dominates the association of journalists and student and faculty groups at the University of Caracas.

Finally, the author underestimates the tremendous advantages enjoyed by the Communists under the Perez Jimenez military dictatorship, emphasizing instead the difficulties the PCV faced in operating illegally. In fact, Perez Jimenez tolerated the operation of one PCV faction and ignored the underground activities of the other, while aggressively attacking the genuine liberal-democratic forces. When the dictatorship was overthrown in 1958, the Communists emerged as a strong, relatively well-disciplined, and reasonably popular political force, although these resources were, as Alexander correctly notes, dissipated as a result of the party's ill-starred romance with armed struggle.

Kempton B. Jenkins

*Beltramini, an Italian Communist, was caught by the Venezuelan police in 1964 when he tried to enter the country with a large shipment of cash apparently intended for the PCV and its guerrilla activities. The evidence clearly indicated that the money came from Communist international operating funds controlled by the Soviets.

Cuba's Students

JAIME SUCHLICKI: *University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920-1968.* Coral Gables, University of Miami Press, 1968.

THIS BOOK OFFERS an interesting case study of the fate of a revolutionary student movement, both before and after the consummation of an actual revolution. Focusing on the student body of the University of Havana, the author, currently on the faculty of the University of Miami and a research associate of its Center for Advanced International Studies, describes the struggle of the Cuban student activists for an autonomous university and a better nation.

Starting with the university reform movement of the 1920's, he follows in some detail the students' fight against the dictatorship of Machado (1928-33) and Batista (1934-44), their frustration resulting from the failure of the Auténtico party (a democratic left-wing party led by a former university professor and student leaders in opposition to Batista in 1935-1944) to fulfill its promises of structural changes in the universities, the institutional breakdown of the educational and political system caused by Batista's *coup d'état* in 1952, and the subsequent rebellion against the dictator. One of the most precious goals of the student movement —university autonomy—was realized after the 1933 Revolution and was consecrated in the 1940 Constitution. But this achievement was subverted by gangs of pseudo-students become political activists. Under the shelter of academic immunity, they engaged in political infighting and intimidated their professors and the university administrators in order to pass examinations without studying and to obtain academic sinecures.

The student goal of developing a better nation, which seemingly had been realized with Castro's revolutionary triumph of 1959, was also bound to be frustrated. Stating that as a result of the revolution the state and the university had become identical and that conflict between them was therefore impossible, Castro seized control of the student movement and proceeded to eliminate university autonomy. Suchlicki describes numerous tactics used to achieve these purposes: public opinion was mobilized against student leaders challenging Castro's power; government support was given to a loyalist pseudo-student in his candidacy for the presidency of the Federation of University Students (FEU); charges of counterrevolutionary activity were directed against non-conforming professors and students; the militia, a paramilitary organization, was ordered to occupy university buildings; and discharged faculty members were replaced with loyal but incompetent revolutionaries.

In 1962, the former president of the Communist Party (PSP), Juan Marinello (a former cabinet member under the first Batista's administration), who had criticized the students' attempt to kill the dictator in 1957, was appointed rector of the University of Havana. The independent FEU disappeared five years later, merged with the League of Young Communists (UJC). The new status of the university was defined by its new rector in 1966 as follows: "In countries like Cuba, where the people are running the country through their government, university autonomy is really something that is quite illogical. The university is part of the state. . . ."

According to Suchlicki, political participation and intellectual pluralism at the Cuban universities have been sacrificed to the cause of intellectual uniformity and mobilization behind the state's economic plans. However, Castro's university reform has corrected two significant weaknesses of the prerevolutionary system of education by providing channels for the upward mobility of gifted individuals and filling the nation's need for technicians.

This has been accomplished by developing special programs which prepare workers and peasants for enrollment in the university (where most of them study on scholarships), and by a shift in career orientation away from traditional humanistic studies toward science and technology. But the costs have been high; they include the elimination of democracy in the student movement, eradication of university autonomy, elimination of student independence (university admission and the distribution of scholarships are based on party loyalty), and the mobilization of the students for labor tasks at the expense of study time. Structural changes in the administration have resulted in the deterioration in the quality of teaching and an increase in student absenteeism.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Suchlicki's book is a worthy contribution to the study of the universal phenomenon of campus rebellion. His objective and carefully documented presentation of the Cuban case shows the price that may have to be paid if a student movement cannot find the proper instrumentalities for accomplishing its goals and if the establishment refuses to yield to the justified demands of a society in transition.

Carmelo Mesa-Lago

Castro's Guerrilla Days

NEILL MACAULAY: *A Rebel in Cuba: An American's Memoir*. Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1970.

NOW A PROFESSOR of history at the University of Florida, Neill Macaulay spent the latter part of 1958 as a guerrilla with a small unit of Castro's forces whose mission was to harry Batista's troops and supporters in Pinar del Rio. His unpretentious account of that experience is enlightening, providing as it does a perspective of Castro's campaign quite different from that of the social scientist, the polemicist, or the ideologue.

The kind of activity Macaulay describes is of course familiar: most aspects of guerrilla life in Batista's Cuba were not radically different from what they have been in other places at other times—Yugoslavia and Greece, Guatemala and Colombia, the Philippines and Indochina. Macaulay tells of the dampness and chill, the mud and the filth, the forced marches and the interludes of tranquillity; of personal heroism and camaraderie; of hospitable peasants and suspected informers; of summary executions and brutal ambushes. Much of the description, with appropriate changes in matters of locale, actors, and idiom, might apply to guerrilla activity almost anywhere — even perhaps to Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys or Francis Marion's raiders in the southern swamps.

The book's particular value to the student of the Castro Revolution lies, first, in its depiction of the primitive and, often enough, nearly non-existent apparatus of communication and coordination employed by Castro and his followers. For instance, Macaulay's group was only remotely in touch with Castro's forces in Oriente, and neither group was apparently able to coordinate its activities effectively with those of the rebels in Havana. The latter, moreover, being drawn from the urban middle class, harbored revolutionary values and expectations that differed markedly from those of the rural guerrillas.

It is the author's analysis of the motivations and expectations of these guerrillas that is the second most valuable aspect of the book. (Macaulay, it must be stressed, scrupulously avoids extrapolating and generalizing beyond the narrow limits of the environment within which he himself moved during this period.) What comes through most strongly is the almost total lack of a coherent ideological and programmatic commitment among the guerrillas. There is, instead, simply a fierce determination to destroy Batista and those associated with him, coupled with an almost idolatrous attachment to Fidel and a blind faith in his capacity to effect Cuba's social transformation.

Macaulay writes well, and his narrative is quick-paced. His book is a welcome and useful addition to the literature that has been produced on the Castro Revolution.

John N. Plank

True Believer

HERBERT L. MATTHEWS: *Fidel Castro*. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1969.

THOSE WHO HAVE READ Herbert Matthews' earlier writings on the Cuban Revolution have, for all practical purposes, already read *Fidel Castro*. Matthews believes that the Cuban Revolution has always been Castro's revolution, to do with as he sees fit. Communism is viewed as a late addition in the service of the "radical, populist social revolution" which Fidel the pragmatist has pursued since his university days.

All of this and much more, however, has been either argued more convincingly or disposed of by Theodore Draper and several other writers whom Matthews criticizes throughout his present book.

The author still believes that he is one of the few persons in the United States who has really understood the Cuban Revolution. In an earlier book entitled *The Cuban Story*, he wrote: "What does one know of this revolution who does not know Fidel?" In *Fidel Castro*, we find the observations of a man who is convinced that he knows Fidel quite well indeed; yet, Matthews' experiences seem to have made it almost impossible for him to look upon "el Lider maximo" objectively. The result is a book which, though certainly of interest to students of the Cuban Revolution, imparts a very distorted picture to those who have not already read widely on the subject and are therefore unable to view Matthews' statements and judgments critically.

To begin with, the book contains serious errors of fact which tend to obscure the fundamental nature of Castro's rule. A case in point is the author's misrepresentation of the role of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. The book is also replete with contradictions on such key issues as Fidel's path to Marxism-Leninism and his early advocacy of a democratic revolution. It verges on downright nonsense when the author writes of the "freedoms" the Cuban people supposedly enjoy today —and even on dishonesty in its treatment of Castro's reasons for supporting the Soviet-bloc occupation of Czechoslovakia.

But perhaps the worst aspect of the book is the author's attempt to justify, within the Cuban context, virtually all of Castro's policies and actions, even the most pernicious. This leads him to conclude that any Cuban who does not agree with Fidel is a traitor to the revolution deserving imprisonment, exile, or whatever punishment Castro thinks is appropriate, and to serve up such irrational judgments as the statement that "it is demonstrable that he [Fidel] brought a better life to a majority of Cubans—if not always today and for the older generations, then tomorrow and for the youth." This kind of unreasoned and biased evaluation is, unfortunately, typical of what Matthews has to offer in this apologetic biography.

William E. Ratliff

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rise and Fall of a Party: The Cuban CP (1925-59)

By Boris Goldenberg

Perhaps no political party in modern history has been propelled along such curious paths by what Hegel termed the "cunning of Reason" as has the Communist Party of Cuba. Brought into being in 1925 through the amalgamation of various small Communist groupings, it remained a powerless sect for a number of years until, in one of the biggest popular revolutions of recent Latin American history (1929–34), it acquired an important but ambivalent role that was to have a profound effect on its future development. To be more specific, the party adhered to an "ultra-leftist" line that earned it the hostility of the very forces which, from its own perspective, it should have recognized as representative of the progressive, anti-imperialistic "national bourgeoisie"—and hence as its natural, if only temporary, allies. Consequently failing to form a popular front with these forces, the party—in its opportunistic quest for power—allied itself from 1937 to 1944 with Fulgencio Batista, the army "strong man" whom it had denounced only a short while before as a fascist counterrevolutionary. Under Batista's patronage, what had hitherto been a small sect of revolutionaries developed into a sizable workers' party operating within the framework of the Cuban political "establishment." During the World War II period of Soviet-Western alliance, the party followed in the footsteps of the North American Communist "revisionist," Earl Browder, and pursued a pro-democratic and pro-US policy, becoming the first Communist Party in Latin America to hold ministerial posts in a national government.

Following the defeat of the Batista coalition in the elections of 1944, the Communists sought to maintain their position of power by entering into collaboration with the victorious *Autentico* party, which they had formerly attacked as pro-fascist. This alliance of convenience lasted only until 1947, by which time the *Autenticos* no longer needed the Communists and the latter were already shifting to a Cold War line. Now, however, because of their own past record of opportunistic collaboration with whatever regime was in power, the Communists found themselves incapable of capitalizing on the widespread popular disenchant-

---

Mr. Goldenberg is head of the Latin American Department of the Deutsche Welle broadcasting system in Germany. He is author of The Cuban Revolution and Latin America *(New York, Praeger, 1965) and* Zehn Jahre kubanische Revolution *(Hannover, Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1969). This article is a translated and slightly abridged version of a chapter from a forthcoming book on the Communist Party of Cuba. It is reprinted here by permission of the* Vierteljahresberichte *of the Forschungsinstitut der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Cologne, where it originally appeared.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment—even in *Autentico* ranks—brought about by the corruption and mismanagement of the regime. At the same time, the bureaucratization of the party during the years of its collaboration in the government had diminished its capability to engage in effective underground activity. This became manifest in 1953 when Batista, after recapturing power by means of a *coup d'état,* turned against his former collaborators and outlawed the party. Having cut itself off to a large extent from the anti-Batista forces by virtue of its past policies, the party fell back into political isolation and turned once more into an ineffectual sect, even though the repressive measures taken by the Batista dictatorship were directed more against other opposition elements than against the Communists.

When, eventually, Cuba's disaffected intellectual youth, supported by large segments of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, launched the terrorist campaign against Batista that was the prelude to Fidel Castro's guerrilla war in the Cuban mountains, the Communists denounced the young rebels as "petty-bourgeois putschists." Taking the position that the dictatorship could not be overthrown by revolutionary struggle, they continued until 1958 to advocate the formation of a united front of all anti-Batista forces as a prerequisite for effective political action and did not even establish contact with Castro until a few months before his victory. As a consequence, Cuba's "old" Communists were outflanked "from the left" by a charismatic leader who came down from the mountains, and the first Communist revolution—albeit of a unique type—to succeed on Latin American soil was achieved without, and in part against, them.

This tragicomedy was followed by a no less remarkable epilogue. When the Communist Party terminated its 36 years of independent existence in 1961 to merge with the Castroites in a united party of socialist revolution then in the process of formation, it did so with high hopes that it would be able to dominate the new party. These hopes were soon dashed. Cuba's new dictator proceeded to confine the activities of the "old" Communists within narrow limits and, in 1962, brought them firmly under his control, stripping them of all actual power.

Prelude to Revolution

As what Marxists would term a "semi-colony" of its huge North American neighbor, the United States, Cuba in the 1920's exhibited conditions that seemed to make it fertile ground for the implantation and growth of revolutionary ideas. Key positions in the Cuban economy had passed into the hands of North American interests. The country, with its narrow economic base (sugar and tobacco), exported its products chiefly to the United States, which in turn supplied most of Cuba's imports. Moreover, with the bulk of its small 3.5-million population poor, the industrially advanced United States just next door, and free-trade concepts predominating, there was little chance for the development of domestic industry producing for the domestic market, or for the growth of a real bourgeois class. Conditions were also unfavorable for the emergence of a productive middle stratum. A growing number of university graduates—roughly 30 percent of them in law and 40 percent in medicine, as against only 8 percent in science, engineering, agriculture and veterinary medicine—constituted an intellectual semi-proletariat who saw their best chances of social and professional advancement in acquiring government jobs. The university diploma became the admission ticket to the comfortable world of government sinecures, politics the most important "industry," corruption a necessity of life, and the state lottery the prime dispenser of hope for the common people.

The fact that Cuba's fate depended so heavily on factors beyond its control—particularly, on the quantity and price of sugar required by the world market, which were subject to sharp fluctuations—precluded any "planning," fostered irrationality, parasitic tendencies, and the "lottery mentality" of a society intrinsically deficient in entrepreneurs.

The lower stratum was just as heterogenous as the "middle class" of shopkeepers, artisans, petty officials, tenant farmers, and members—often without employment—of the "free professions." In the rural districts, laborers working on the sugar plantations greatly outnumbered farmers of all categories. A great number were seasonal workers employed only during the harvesting of the cane, some of them finding similar temporary jobs during the coffee harvesting season which followed. The workers employed by the railroads and a few US-owned urban industrial enterprises constituted a sort of small labor aristocracy. On the other hand, the employees of the smaller urban enterprises, the vast number of domestic workers, and the "reserve army" of unemployed were much worse off. Superimposed upon these differences were conflicts between "natives" and foreigners (including Spaniards, Haitians, and laborers imported from Jamaica) and between whites and blacks. It is consequently not surprising that the labor unions, which long remained without official recognition, were weak, limited to the large urban centers, and filled with conflicting currents of anarcho-syndicalism and reformism. It is no less surprising that "anti-imperialism" was widespread and deep-rooted not only among the intellectuals and segments of the middle class and labor, but also—and not least—among the *politicos,* who found the neighbor to the north an ideal whipping-boy for their own ineffectuality, and who also tended to view US influence as a threat to their own vested interest in corruption.

From 1921 through 1924, the presidency was held by Alfredo Zayas, under whose leadership all previous

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

records for corruption were surpassed. At the same time, his regime sought to maintain a maximum of freedom, which however took on chaotic forms and gave rise to acts of terrorism and violence by anarcho-syndicalists and other radical elements.[1] At the end of 1924, the liberal politician and former general, Gerardo Machado, was overwhelmingly elected to succeed Zayas on a platform pledging to restore order and put an end to financial corruption and mismanagement. During its first years in office, Machado's regime gained wide popularity. The economic situation improved; new protective tariffs benefited domestic industry; and a large public works program reduced the number of unemployed, winning the President a following among the lower social strata as well.

After 1928, however, the political situation changed drastically. Although the Cuban constitution prohibited a president from serving two consecutive terms, Machado in 1928 got the relevant provisions of the constitution amended and won reelection to a second term—now extended by the amendments to six years instead of four. The workers and peasants, as well as a large section of the upper strata, accepted this docilely enough, but a ferment of opposition began among the petty bourgeoisie and especially among the intellectuals. Both conservative and liberal as well as more or less radical-democratic politicians began forming underground organizations to agitate against the dictatorship. Anti-Machado demonstrations took place at the University of Havana, and the first revolutionary "student directorate" was formed.

Just as this ferment was getting under way, the worldwide depression hit Cuba in 1929–30. The sugar harvest dropped from five million tons in 1929 to less than two million tons in 1933, and the price of sugar from 1.8 to 0.57 cents a pound, causing the total value of the sugar harvested to shrink from $200 million in 1929 to $42 million in 1932. There was a similarly sharp decline in tobacco sales, and the crisis in these two key industries spread to all sectors of the economy. Many medium and small businesses closed their doors. Unemployment assumed gigantic proportions. When desperate workers began striking, Machado replied with repressive action which created the possibility of a united front of the lower and middle strata.

The first revolutionary mass strike broke out in March 1930. At Havana University, a new student directorate was formed, its members including Carlos Prio Socarras, Raul Roa, Eduardo Chibas, and Aureliano Sanchez Arango. There were demonstrations and riots, and government troops occupied and closed the university. In 1931, the "nationalist" followers of Carlos Mendieta, together with other groups, attempted an uprising, but the revolt was crushed. An attempted "intervention" by revolutionaries based abroad also failed. The terrorist ABC organization, whose members were recruited mainly from among the intellectuals, launched its activities. Thus began the revolution that was to bring about the overthrow of the Machado dictatorship in the summer of 1933.

The Birth of Cuban Communism

The first Communist groupings in Cuba came from the ranks of the Socialist Workers' Party, which had been formed in 1905 and belonged to the Socialist International. The party had vegetated for years, and its most activist members had come under the sway of Bolshevik ideas. In 1923, the septuagenarian Carlos Baliño, a former follower of Cuban freedom fighter Jose Marti (killed in battle in 1895) and a co-founder of the Socialist Workers' Party, labor leaders Alejandro Barreiro, Jose Peña Vilaboa, Jose Rego, and Joaquin Valdes, and educator Jose Miguel Perez joined in forming the *Agrupacion Comunista de la Habana.*[2]

About a year after its founding, the *Agrupacion Comunista* admitted a new member who was destined to play a key role in the formative years of Cuban communism—the student leader Julio Antonio Mella. Mella was then only 21 years old but was already known in intellectual circles as an active anti-imperialist and revolutionary. He had been the chairman of a student congress in Havana which had called for university reform, struggle against imperialism, and the founding of a people's university to be named after Jose Marti.

The *Agrupacion Comunista* soon established contact with the Communist Party of Mexico,[3] and an emissary of the latter came to Cuba to help weld the various small Communist groups into a regular party. This emissary was Enrique Flores Magon, son of a family which had played a role of some importance in the early stages of the Mexican revolution. The founding party congress convened in mid-August of 1925 in the Vedado section of Havana. It was announced at the congress that the party had some 80 members, but only a fraction of these were present. One of the founders—a Polish-born Communist who then called himself Yunger Semchowitz but later took the name

[1] See Felipe Zapata, "Esquema y Notas para una historia de la organizacion obrera en Cuba," *Unidad Castronomica* (Havana), September 1948, p. 29.

[2] Interview with Jose Rego Lopez by Jose L. Padron, *Revolucion* (Havana), Aug. 16, 1963. It is noteworthy that unidentified Cuban "Communist groups" had been invited to the Third World Congress of the Comintern in 1921 but had sent no delegates (see *Protocol of the Third Congress of the Communist International,* Hamburg, 1921, p. 13).

[3] See Pedro Serviat, *40 Aniversario de la Fundacion del Partido Comunista,* Havana, 1963, p. 104.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Fabio Grobart [4] —wrote fifteen years later of this meeting:

How small and insignificant that party congress appeared! . . . The largest of the amalgamated organizations, the *Agrupacion Comunista*, had a total of 27 members. . . . Just ten comrades took part in the congress.[5]

Perhaps the writer's memory was faulty, because other sources claim that 13 delegates and five others attended the proceedings.[6]

The congress expressed special thanks not only to the Mexican party but also to the three-member delegation of the "Hebrew section" of the Havana Communist group and its "youth section," of whom Semchowitz (Grobart) was one.[7] The collaboration of the "Hebrew comrades" in the newborn Cuban party was especially important because of their knowledge of the German and Russian languages and their familiarity with the works of Marx and Engels, whereas most of the Cuban members were "Communists of the heart" with only the vaguest notions of Marxist theory.[8]

How little most of the participants knew of Comintern principles and practices was evidenced by questions put to Flores Magon by Mella regarding the nature of a "party cell" and of "democratic centralism," and by Mella's resolute opposition to any participation in general elections. It was only with the greatest effort that Flores Magon and the "Hebrew" comrades managed to gain acceptance of their views over Mella's "ultra-leftist" notions.[9] A typical young *caudillo*, Mella showed little inclination to submit to any kind of collective discipline. After being arrested in November 1925, he engaged in a hunger strike on his own initiative, and several former Communist sources have claimed that because of this he was expelled from the Cuban party and only readmitted through the intervention of the Comintern.[10]

The founding party congress elected a Central Committee of nine members (five of them workers), with Jose Miguel Perez named secretary-general. The entire leadership, however, soon fell victim to official persecution. Perez was arrested only a few days after his election and, because of his Spanish nationality, was deported. Mella, as already mentioned, was arrested in November. The elderly Carlos Baliño died in the early part of 1926. Peña Vilaboa, who assumed the post of secretary-general in place of Perez, was incapacitated by illness and seems to have been succeeded by Joaquin Valdes, who in turn was soon forced into exile.[11] Several of the founding members preferred to withdraw into private life. The party found itself—in the words of Fabio Grobart [12]—"in effect, without leadership and organization. It had to start all over again. . . ."

The man who was to give the party a fresh start was Ruben Martinez Villena, a distinguished intellectual, poet and lawyer, who had befriended Mella and acted as his attorney. Influenced in no small measure by Grobart,[13] this ardent romantic embraced Marxism-Leninism and joined the party in 1927. Though already suffering from incurable tuberculosis, he threw himself into party work with unbounded enthusiasm, becoming especially active in the then still small Cuban National Confederation of Labor

[4] Born around 1900, Grobart is reported to have been a member of the Polish Communist Party before emigrating to Cuba in 1922 under the name of Abraham Simkowitz. (See Boris Kozolvhyk, *The Political Biographies of Three Castro Officials*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, RM 4994 Re, May 1966.) His mother tongue was Yiddish, and since he had not yet learned Spanish, he had to rely on an interpreter named Vaserman at the founding congress. Though it has been claimed that Grobart was an "agent of the Comintern," this appears to be without substantiation. According to Pedro Serviat (see footnote 3), Grobart was not elected a full member of the Central Committee, but only as an alternate; however, he subsequently acquired an important behind-the-scenes role in the party, if for no other reason than the fact that so many of the other founding members fell victim to official persecution. Grobart himself was deported from Cuba in 1932 but returned the following year. After another trip abroad at the end of the 1940's, he again returned to Cuba to become the first editor of the newly-established theoretical review *Cuba Socialista* in September 1951. Castro, in his speech in Havana on October 4, 1960, introducing the members of the newly-established Central Committee of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution, described Fabio Grobart as "the founder of the first [Cuban] Communist Party."

[5] Fabio Grobart, *15 años de lucha*, 1940, p. 3.

[6] Serviat, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[7] Serviat, *op. cit.*, pp. 109–10.

[8] Fabio Grobart, in *El Mundo*, Aug. 18, 1965.

[9] Serviat, *op. cit.*, pp. 110 ff.

[10] After his release, Mella went to Mexico, where he formed a Cuban émigré organization and was later elected to the Central Committee of the Mexican Communist Party. In 1927, he traveled to Europe and attended the Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism as a "delegate" of the Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas and other Latin American organizations (see *Die Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont* [Proceedings of the Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism], Berlin, 1927). Following a brief visit to Moscow, he returned to Mexico and, according to unconfirmed reports, served for a time as secretary-general of the Mexican party until he was reportedly ousted from this position and from the party in late 1928 by a "right-wing faction" headed by A. Stirner (Edgar Woog). A few weeks thereafter, he was readmitted to the party, only to be assassinated a few days later (January 10, 1929) on a public street by Mexican agents of Machado. The claim that he was actually murdered by a Comintern agent named Contreras (Vittorio Vidali) lacks credibility.

[11] Although the author has been unable to confirm definitely Valdes' occupancy of the post of secretary-general, there is no question that he played a leading role in the young party for a time. As Dr. Filomeno Rodriguez Abassal, an "old" Communist, observed in 1964, "he has been undeservedly forgotten" ("El caso Soler," in *Bohemia* [Havana], April 24, 1964).

[12] "Recuerdos sobre Ruben," in *Hoy* (Havana), Jan. 16, 1964.

[13] Julian Ordoqui, in an interview with Nicolas Guillen (*Hoy*, Aug. 14, 1960) recalled that all the Communist leaders of that time, including Martinez Villena, "were helped by Fabio in our development, because he was the most politically advanced of the comrades."

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(CNOC), initially dominated by anarcho-syndicalists.[14] Besides acting as legal counselor to the workers, he framed programs and manifestos, helped organize strikes, and defended unionists on trial. It was in substantial part due to his efforts that several anarcho-syndicalists became converts to communism and that a number of Communist Party members (*e.g.*, Cesar Vilar, Alejandro Barreiro, and Sandalio Junco) moved into leading union positions—although this latter process was also facilitated by the fact that the Machado regime engineered the assassination of known anarcho-syndicalist leaders and drove others into exile.[15]

In early 1930, the CNOC was outlawed after it called a mass strike reportedly joined by 200,000 workers. When the strike collapsed under the blows of the government, the Communists issued a totally irrational call for an "unlimited general strike," which could not, however, be carried into effect. Sought by the police, Martinez Villena hid out successfully in the capital for a while and then managed to escape abroad, going to the Soviet Union, where he had to undergo medical treatment. Against the advice of physicians, he returned to Cuba at the end of 1932 in order to lead the Communist Party during the decisive phase of the anti-Machado revolution. Mortally ill, he was at last forced to abandon all work in late 1933 and entered a sanitarium where he died on January 16, 1934. Although he had been the real leader of the party between 1927 and 1930, and again in 1933, he had always declined the post of secretary-general.[16] After Valdes, this post appears to have been held successively by Dr. Jorge Vivo (who then emigrated to Mexico), by Jose Antonio Guerra, and by the black physician and apostle of "Negro nationalism," Dr. Martin Castellanos. Finally, in 1934, a former shoemaker by the name of Francisco Calderio from the east Cuban city of Manzanilla, evidently a protégé of Grobart, assumed the office of secretary-general and from then on, under the name of Blas Roca, led the party until its dissolution.

Attempts to Bolshevize the Party

Materials issued by the Executive Committee of the Comintern in preparation for the Seventh World Congress described the Communist Party of Cuba prior to 1930 as "a small sectarian group of no more than 250 to 300 members and having little connection with the masses." Nor did the Communist-inspired mass strike of March 1930 apparently alter the Comintern's low estimate of the party's effectiveness because the same materials went on to state that "a genuine changeover to working with the masses took place only in 1932, when the party extended its activity to the sugar workers." [17]

The Comintern thus took a manifestly critical view of its Cuban section—and not without reason from its own viewpoint. Mella, Martinez Villena, and their closest Cuban-born comrades-in-arms were certainly revolutionaries, but just as certainly they were not Bolsheviks. Rather they were Communists of the heart, idealists, individualists, radical democrats, nationalists and anti-imperialists, regarding themselves as the most radical participants in the movement against Machado. While most of their proletarian fellow-combatants remained profoundly influenced by anarcho-syndicalism, these intellectuals were impatient voluntarists rooted in the Hispanic tradition and more inclined towards individual heroism than towards discipline. They had neither the time nor the desire to devote themselves to any serious study of Marxism-Leninism. Nothing was more alien to their make-up than calm analysis of the situation, cold calculation, or bureaucratism.

Small wonder, then, that the slogans employed by the Cuban Communists in that period had little in common with the current Comintern advocacy of class struggle. The Cuban party's struggle was directed much more towards achieving freedom and democracy for the Cuban people than towards realizing any "immediate material demands of the workers." The influence exercised by its leaders flowed from their personal dedication and not from organization. No "illegal apparatus" existed any more than did factory cells; membership fluctuated, and dues were paid only fitfully. It was therefore essential—in the eyes of the Comintern—that the Cuban party be bolshevized.

The Comintern view was set forth in a long and critical letter addressed to the Cuban party by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the United States in late 1930.[18] In brief summary, the letter ran as follows: The Cuban party was far removed from bolshevism, was lagging behind develop-

[14] The CNOC was organized in August 1925 and claimed to embrace 200,000 workers—a figure which Grobart has termed greatly exaggerated. Its relative weakness compared to the larger reformist and non-political labor federations was, in fact, one of the reasons why it was allowed to operate for a while and was not officially proscribed until 1930. See Fabio Grobart, "El movimiento obrero cubano de 1925 a 1933," in *Cuba Socialista* (Havana), August 1966.

[15] The Machado regime's suppression of the anarcho-syndicalists certainly helped the Communists to extend their leadership over the more militant segments of the Cuban labor movement, but it also benefited the moderate, reformist elements, whose leader, Juan Arevalo, organized the Cuban Federation of Labor. See Calixto Maso, "El movimiento obrero cubano," in *Panoramas* (Mexico City), March–June 1964.

[16] Grobart, "Recuerdos sobre Ruben," *loc. cit. supra.*

[17] *The Communist International before the Seventh World Congress: Materials*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1935, p. 494.

[18] Published in *The Communist* (official organ of the CPUSA), Vol. X, No. 1, January 1931.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments and therefore incapable of leading the growing revolutionary movement. Its main weakness lay in proclaiming abstract political slogans instead of concrete, everyday proletarian demands. This tendency had been evidenced during the strike of March 1930, which the Cuban party had conducted under the slogans of legalization of the labor unions, restoration of democratic liberties, and the overthrow of the Machado dictatorship—a line which blurred the distinction between the Communists and the bourgeois opponents of Machado. In addition to such "rightist" deviations, the letter also charged the Cuban party with deviations to the "left." Specifically, its attempt to proclaim an "unlimited general strike" was called meaningless and dangerous because it had been tantamount to a *de facto* call for revolution in the absence of prior preparations. Such leftist blunders, said the letter, had tended to isolate the Communists from the masses and to strengthen "the position of the social-fascist [sic] union leaders."

In response to this letter and directives from the Caribbean Bureau of the Comintern, the Cuban party in November 1930 executed a shift in policy, accompanied by a "purge" in which several prominent members, including Sandalio Junco,[19] were expelled from the party. Some six months later, a lengthy article by a Cuban Communist author, published in the official monthly of the CPUSA, reported on the effects of these changes and the general situation in the party.[20] While claiming that the changes had already produced positive results—*i.e.*, a rise in party membership from 300 to 500 and an improvement in work methods—the article acknowledged that the party was "still seriously hampered by strong remnants of petty-bourgeois reformism and of radicalism, as well as by organizational shortcomings." On the latter count, the author noted that a disproportionately small percentage of the party's members were employed in key economic sectors, that a similarly small percentage of the members were native-born, and finally, that there were very few Negro members; moreover, the party still had no factory cells, no fully-developed program of action, and no press organs. As a result of these weaknesses, the article concluded, the bourgeois "nationalist" opponents of Machado were leading the masses and seemed to be the only force fighting the dictatorship.

In the spring of 1933, shortly after returning to Cuba from the USSR, Martinez Villena was able to portray the situation of the party in a much more favorable light. In an article for the CPUSA's monthly organ,[21] he reported a number of Communist successes: A sugar workers' union affiliated with the CNOC had at last been organized at the end of 1932. The Communist Party had won *de facto* "semi-legal" status because of the authorities' inability to suppress its activity. Strikes and revolts had already taken place in rural areas. Armed workers' militia units had been organized in Central Cuba, and party membership in the province of Santa Clara had multiplied sixfold within a few months. The red hammer-and-sickle flag had been hoisted over several sugar mills. The morale of the government army was crumbling, and in many places its soldiers were refusing to resist the workers. The revolution was fast ripening.

Indeed, Cuba already found itself immersed in an acute revolutionary situation. Unrest was growing in both urban and rural areas, terroristic acts by the ABC organization were on the increase, and the majority of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata were showing their hostility to the dictator more and more openly. In May 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent Sumner Welles to Cuba as US ambassador with instructions to mediate between the Machado government and the opposition and, if necessary, to induce Machado to resign. A time of testing for the Communists was at hand.

At the end of July, a strike of bus company workers, initiated by the CNOC, began in the Cuban capital. The strike quickly grew in size and spread to other cities as well as to the rural areas, embracing not only workers but salaried employees, government officials, teachers, lawyers, doctors and merchants. Virtually the entire people stormily demanded Machado's resignation.

On August 3, the Communist Party issued a manifesto. In keeping with the party's new line, the manifesto put concrete economic demands in the foreground—an eight-hour workday in industry and commerce; payment of all back wages; measures to relieve

[19] A Negro baker from the province of Matanzas, Junco was a labor activist from his youth and joined the Cuban Communist Party in 1926 or 1927. Soon thereafter he had to leave Cuba and went to Mexico, where he assisted Mella in organizing the already mentioned Cuban émigré group. After a brief visit to the Soviet Union, apparently prior to the summer of 1929, he returned to Cuba, rebelled against the Comintern's "ultra-leftist" line, and organized his own party faction, which led to his expulsion. He subsequently joined Antonio Guiteras' Young Cuba organization, which merged with the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1936. As a leader of the party's worker section, he was looked upon as a dangerous enemy by the Communists, who had allied themselves with Batista in 1938. On May 8, 1942, Junco was to be the principal speaker at a memorial gathering in honor of Antonio Guiteras in Sancti-Spiritus, Central Cuba, and the Communist Party, now represented in the government coalition, sent a gang of armed hoodlums to disrupt the meeting. Junco was gunned down by the hoodlums as he stood at the speaker's rostrum.

[20] O. Rodriguez, "Our Present Task in Cuba: Commentary on the Directives of the Caribbean Bureau of the Comintern," *The Communist*, Vol. X, No. 6, June 1931.

[21] "The Rise of the Revolutionary Movement in Cuba," *The Communist*, Vol. XII, No. 6, June 1933.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unemployment; cancellation of the indebtedness of farmers and small shopkeepers; and suspension of Cuban government debt payments to North American banks. These demands were followed by a proclamation of equality for all Cubans regardless of race and full rights of self-determination for Negroes in areas where they constituted the majority, and only then by political slogans demanding the "overthrow of the blood-stained Machado regime," the "liberation of political prisoners," and the "restoration of democratic liberties." At the end came anti-imperialistic slogans aimed at the United States.[22]

On August 7, the rumor spread through Havana that Machado had resigned, and the populace poured jubilantly into the streets. This news, however, proved wrong. Soldiers and police were called out and fired on the crowds. There were dead and wounded. Ambassador Sumner Welles conferred with the top officers of the Cuban Army and suggested that they persuade Machado to step down.

With his back to the wall, Machado called in the Communist leaders of the CNOC on August 8 and promised to meet their major demands—apparently including legalization of the union movement—if they would stop the anti-government strike. What were the Communists to do? The Caribbean Bureau of the Comintern had directed them to concentrate on working-class demands for concrete concessions and to draw a sharp dividing line between themselves and the bourgeois-democratic forces. At the same time, they feared the possibility of US intervention if disorders continued. The result was that they acceded to Machado's proposals and publicly appealed to the masses to end the strike.[23]

This proved to be a grave mistake for which the Cuban Communists would have to pay heavily in the future—a mistake, however, that stemmed directly from the Comintern line of the period, as transmitted to the Cuban party through the Comintern's Caribbean Bureau and the Central Committee of the CPUSA. The Communist appeal for cessation of the strike went unheeded by the masses, who regarded it as all the more traitorous because it came just one day after the shootings of August 7.[24] Moreover, on August 11, the army leadership demanded Machado's resignation, and the next day he fled the country. Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, a hitherto little-known politician who was acceptable to the army leaders, to all "moderate" elements, and to the United States, was named Provisional President.

But instead of diminishing, unrest continued to mount. Machado's overthrow and the crippling of his power apparatus—especially of his hated police, many of whom were hunted down in the streets and killed—opened the floodgates to a spontaneous and chaotic revolutionary movement which spread throughout the country. In the cities, strikes and demonstrations multiplied; in the rural areas, workers occupied sugar mills and established "soviets." In some provincial towns, revolutionary groups seized local governing authority, sometimes under the red flag.

Communists vs. Nationalists

On September 4 a new upheaval took place. Sergeant Fulgencio Batista unleashed an army insurrection, declared the officers dismissed, and—along with his non-commissioned officers—assumed command of the armed forces, placing them at the disposal of the intellectual national revolutionaries and democrats, who championed a politically unknown professor of medicine, Ramon Grau San Martin, to replace Cespedes. After a few days of government by a five-man junta, Grau was made Provisional President, assuming what could hardly be described as power. The students who rallied around him and set the tone of his government inspired enthusiasm, but they were not only without experience and organization, but also without clearly-defined goals and a sense of realities. What the situation was like in the presidential palace at the time was recorded by an American news correspondent in Havana as follows:

Visiting the palace is like visiting a lunatic asylum with all the inmates turned loose to do as they please. . . . In the press room I find soldiers sitting on all the desks, smoking. . . . Finally I arrive at the cabinet room where President Grau receives everyone. It is a long narrow room with a long narrow table. The President sits at the

[22] William Simons, "Background to Recent Events," *The Communist*, Vol. XII, No. 9, September 1933.

[23] Nine months later, *Inprecorr* (English edition, Vol. XIV, No. 27, May 4, 1934) explained the decision of the Cuban party leaders in these terms: "The Central Committee believed at the time that an armed struggle against Machado would lead directly to imperialistic intervention, and that the Cuban people were not ready for such a fight. This was the reason why the Central Committee called upon the workers to break off the strike after it had already started to turn into an armed struggle."

[24] It should be noted that Communist historians in recent years have covered up this episode. For example, no mention is made of it either in a 47-page article by the Russian historian, E. L. Nitoburg, dealing with events in Cuba between 1930 and 1935 and published in a volume entitled *Kuba* (Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1961, pp. 357–403), or in German Communist historian Jürgen Hell's account of this period in his *Kurze Geschichte des kubanischen Volkes* (Berlin, 1966, pp. 239–257). Writing in Cuba in 1964, Fabio Grobart could not help admitting the episode, but in analyzing it he carefully avoided any hint of contributory Comintern responsibility and further tried to hide the truth by not even mentioning the date of Machado's meeting with the Communist leaders and pretending that the compromise was concluded *prior* to the events of August 7 and then repudiated by the party when those events occurred (see *Cuba Socialista*, August 9, 1966, p. 117).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

head of the table, surrounded by the *Directorio Estudiantil*. . . . No one around the President pays the slightest attention to him, nor has the courtesy to stop talking long enough for him to make himself heard.[25]

The Grau government lasted only four months, but during that brief span it poured forth a flood of revolutionary decrees, manifestos, and laws. The eight-hour workday, minimum-wage regulations, legalization of all parties and labor unions, the right to strike, freedom of the press, and measures benefiting the rural population—all were enacted into law. In addition, the new regime instituted highly popular measures aimed at North American interests, including government takeover of the electric-power company, reduction of power rates, and a unilateral moratorium on all foreign debt payments. Especially noteworthy was a decree "nationalizing" labor: effective immediately, it stipulated that at least half the employees of all enterprises in Cuba must be native-born Cubans, and that the rest must, wherever possible, be naturalized Cuban citizens.

Feeling its interests threatened, the United States withheld recognition from the Grau regime and dispatched warships which cruised menacingly off the coast but took no hostile action. That the US government refrained from direct intervention was attributable to the sagacity of President Roosevelt and the new US special envoy to Havana, Jefferson Caffery, who strove—with eventual success—to bring an end to the chaotic, revolutionary and anti-imperialistic Grau government by political means.

For chaos still gripped the country, and Grau found himself confronted with many opposition elements. There were the dismissed army officers who, expecting help from the US, had armed and barricaded themselves in a Havana hotel, from which they eventually had to be driven out by Batista's troops with artillery fire. There were the landowners, capitalists, industrialists and businessmen who feared the loss of their property holdings and profits. There was the ABC organization, which engineered an insurrection that cost many lives. There were the tens of thousands of Spaniards who faced losing their jobs as a result of the Grau government's "nationalization" of labor. Last but not least, there were the Communists, who were reaching for power.

The German Communist historian, Jürgen Hell, calling Grau "the stout and incorruptible anti-imperialist and patriot" who "embodied the national revolution," has maintained that "the revolution could have been saved if there had been a national block with a single anti-imperialistic program and a *single* candidate—Grau San Martin." [26] Hell is frankly critical of the course taken at the time by the Communists, who mistakenly "set the immediate assumption of power by the proletariat as a near-term objective." "The existing conditions," he points out, "precluded the immediate seizure of power by the proletariat and the poor peasants, because the young Communist Party . . . was still small." [27]

Instead of offering a united front to Grau, the Communists attacked his government as representative of "the big landowners and the bourgeoisie" and made their slogan "All power to the soviets!" They also attacked the decree "nationalizing" labor as narrowly nationalistic, thus losing many potential followers.[28] They likewise failed to take advantage of the divisions which began to crop up within the government—particularly between army leader Batista, who had elevated himself to the rank of colonel, and the radical Minister of Interior, Dr. Antonio Guiteras. Batista, who was increasingly becoming the man most trusted by US Ambassador Cafferey and the "moderate" elements, did everything to bring the chaotic situation under control by military force. On the other hand, Guiteras insisted above all on pushing ahead with revolutionary-democratic measures. The Communists, however, shunned Guiteras, whom they characterized as a "left social-fascist."

Three months after the Grau government finally collapsed in January 1934, having lost even the support of the students, the Second Congress of the Communist Party in April sought to justify the party's course by claiming that the growing influence of Grau and Guiteras among the workers presented "a special danger" which made it "urgently necessary to unmask them." [29] Thus, the resolution adopted by the Congress declared in part:

. . . the fundamental danger lies in the influence of the bourgeois-landlord parties of the "Left" and their reformist, anarchist, Trotskyite agents. . . . It is . . . necessary to lay down as a specific task the unmasking of these elements and their campaigns of demagogy by exposing the role of the *Autenticos* [the party founded by Grau] and Guiteras after coming to power, and their policy in favor of the bourgeois-landlord-imperialist domination.[30]

Even as late as December 1934, after the Cuban Communists had already begun to realize how mistaken their course had been, an article written by one of

[25] Ruby Hart Phillips, *Cuba, Island of Paradox*, New York, McDowell, Obolensky, 1959, p. 73.

[26] Hell, *op. cit.*, pp. 246, 264.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[28] As a 1935 report published by the Foreign Policy Association, New York (*Problems of the New Cuba*) pointed out, "This decree and other nationalist measures led to a noticeable improvement in the living standards of the Cuban workers and contributed to the defeat of the Communists."

[29] Manuel Valencia, *The Second Party Congress of the CP of Cuba*, in *Inprecorr* (Eng. ed.), No. 34, June 15, 1934.

[30] "The Present Situation, Perspectives and Tasks in Cuba" (Resolutions of the Second Congress of the CP of Cuba), in *The Communist*, Vol. XIII, No. 11, Nov. 11, 1934.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the party's top officials, Julian Ordoqui, and published in the monthly organ of the CPUSA, continued to take the same line. "Guiteras," declared the author, "calls upon the masses to trust that he, with his 'revolution,' will solve the situation. [But] as the Communist Party of Cuba has correctly stated, what Guiteras, with his 'Left' demagogy, is preparing is a *coup d'état* in which certain elements of the army that are antagonistic to Batista will take part." [31]

Writing in 1948, a Soviet historian advanced a quite different but no less misleading explanation of the Cuban party's reasons for not supporting Grau:

[On one side,] the old political parties, the businessmen, and the representatives of American interests came out against Grau; these groups thought the government was "too far to the Left." On the other side, Grau was also opposed by elements of the labor movement under Communist leadership, because they regarded the government as too moderate and ineffectual to wage the fight against imperialism.[32]

This could lead the reader to infer that the Communists stood for a far more aggressive line against North American imperialism than did Grau and Guiteras. Had this in fact been the case, the Communists would probably have suffered a loss of popular sympathy since the masses were afraid of US intervention, but on the other hand they might have enhanced their prestige among the radical intellectuals.

In reality, however, the party's policy in this respect reflected the current views of the Comintern, which feared that the Cuban Communists might go too far in their "anti-imperialism," and therefore sought to restrain them. Indicative of the Comintern's position was a lengthy article by G. Sinani, then the Comintern's Russian expert for Latin American questions, which appeared in both *The Communist International* (Russian edition, No. 20, October 15, 1933) and the CPUSA's *The Communist* (Vol. XII, No. 12, December 1933). Writing under the title, "A New Phase in the Revolutionary Events in Cuba," Sinani advised the Cuban Communists to do everything necessary, through concessions, to avert North American intervention. He went on to say:

The Communist Party of Cuba considers it inadvisable for the workers to seize American enterprises and [instead] puts forward the slogan of workers' control. . . . The Communist Party of Cuba considers it inadvisable to force the seizure of plantations belonging to American capital and fights above all for considerable reductions in the rent for this land, for the annulment of all the old debts of the peasants, and for improvement of the situation of agricultural workers. . . . The Communist Party of Cuba considers it advisable for a workers' and peasants' government, if it should be formed, to enter into negotiations with the government of the USA on the conditions for nationalization of big foreign properties while not abandoning this nationalization: *i.e.*, it allows the possibility of buying out these properties. With the same aim, the Communist Party of Cuba allows the possibility of retaining American ownership to some extent in the form of concessions. . . .

Influenced by such counsels from the Comintern, the Cuban Communists in effect joined with the reactionaries in a united front against the representatives of the "national bourgeoisie" and turned against nationalism as well as against any extreme form of anti-imperialism. The result was that while the party grew both in size (reportedly reaching a membership of 6,000 in 1933) and in influence, it alienated itself from the "national bourgeoisie" and the anti-imperialist and democratic forces in the country. It also failed either to consolidate its influence among labor or to provide any real guidance to the revolutionary peasant groups which took up arms in some parts of the country.

The Party Congress of April 1934 explicitly recognized that the party still had not become a "mass party" and was not yet sufficiently "bolshevized." It further acknowledged that the party continued to be influenced by opportunistic and anarchistic ideas; that it suffered from a heavy turnover in membership, from lack of discipline, and from a low ideological level; that it had failed to gain a foothold in the armed forces and to consolidate its influence in the unions, had neglected its work among the peasants, and had generally lagged behind developments. [33] A truly imposing catalogue of shortcomings!

Still more disastrous, however, were the consequences of the Communists' totally wrong assessment of the revolutionary situation in Cuba. Even after the revolutionary movement had already passed its zenith, the party leadership continued to act on the assumption that the revolution was still in an ascending phase. As late as the end of 1934, the Communists had not yet undertaken any meaningful revision of their tactics or made any attempt to forge a united front with the defeated but still militant democratic-revolutionary forces.

Grau had already been replaced in January 1934 by former Colonel Cardos Mendieta, who took office as Provisional President. As a leader of the "nationalists" and a determined foe of Machado, he enjoyed considerable personal prestige and promised to keep intact all the achievements of the Grau era. But behind

[31] J. Ordoqui, "The Rise of the Revolutionary Movement in Cuba," *The Communist*, Vol. XIII, No. 12, December 1934.

[32] L. T. Zubok, *Imperialisticheskaia politika SSA v stranakh karibskovo basseyna*, Moscow, 1948, p. 313.

[33] "The Present Situation, Perspectives and Tasks in Cuba," *The Communist*, Vol. XIII, No. 9, September 1934.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mendieta stood Batista and his army. Many segments of the population had grown weary of fighting and wanted normalization of the economy and improved relations with the United States. For its part, the Roosevelt administration not only recognized Mendieta's government but also proceeded to renounce its right of intervention in Cuba under the notorious Platt amendment [34] and returned the Isle of Pines to Cuban control. In March 1934, a new general strike called by the Communists was thwarted without major difficulty, and the party's influence as well as its membership began to decline.

At the Conference of Latin American Communists in Montevideo in October 1934, the Cuban delegate "Bueno" self-critically condemned the past line pursued by the Cuban party and gave 4,000 as the party's approximate current membership.[35] He emphasized the difficulty of adhering to an anti-imperialist line in view of Cuba's economic dependence on the United States, citing instances in which Communist speakers who attacked the US too vehemently had been shouted down or prevented from speaking by workers. He also pointed out that the Communists' advocacy of collectivization had been very damaging to them among the rural population.

In the last and biggest mass strike of March 1935, which rang down the curtain on the revolutionary period, the Communists played no role. As even a Soviet historian has acknowledged, the Communists proved incapable of taking the initiative, and leadership of the strike "was in the hands of the national reformists of the Cuban Revolutionary Party [the *Autenticos*] and the Young Cuba organization led by Guiteras." [36] The strike was initiated by radical students at the University of Havana and quickly spread over the country, causing virtual paralysis as the cities were deprived of electric power and transportation services. Newspaper employees and even government workers joined in the strike, and the capital was racked by violence as the student revolutionaries resorted to bomb attacks and clashed with the police and army troops. President Mendieta responded by suspending the constitution and placing the country under martial law. The revolutionary movement was ruthlessly crushed by armed force, and its principal leader, Guiteras, was captured and assassinated by Batista's soldiers. *Autentico* leader Grau San Martin and most of his friends went into exile.

At the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in the summer of 1935, Cuban delegate "Marin" frankly stated that his party's "principal mistake" had been "to mechanically place the class interests of the proletariat in opposition to the interests of the national liberation struggle and the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution." [37] With the formal blessing of the Comintern World Congress, the era of the popular front was about to begin for Communists everywhere, including Cuba.

Shift to the United Front

According to the same Cuban delegate to the Seventh Comintern Congress, the Central Committee of the Cuban party, after its fourth plenum in February 1935, had already broached the question of a united front in an offer made to Guiteras' Young Cuba organization but not to Grau's *Autenticos*. The result, he added, was that no united front materialized and the March 1935 general strike "ended in defeat." [38]

But even if the Communists had extended their offer to the *Autenticos*, the latter would not have been likely to accept it, judging from a statement which Eduardo Chibas, one of Grau's closest associates, had made at a student meeting in Havana in November 1934. Addressing the meeting, Chibas had this to say about the Communists:

Those so-called revolutionary leaders who, after the massacre of August 7, 1933, ordered the proletariat to go back to work are today claiming to speak in the name of the revolution. [Yet] they are employing their same old tactic of attacking revolutionaries more violently than they do reactionaries. The more revolutionary a person is, the more strongly the Communists attack him. They attack the ABC more strongly than they do the Conservatives, and the *Autenticos* more strongly than the ABC—and as for Guiteras, they would love to eat him alive. Just because I am so much attacked by these little leaders [*lidericos*] of tropical communism, I am sure that I am a good revolutionary!" [39]

The full significance of these words becomes apparent when we consider that Chibas, who always remained a determined anti-Communist, split with Grau's *Autenticos* in the mid-1940's to form his own party: the Party of the Cuban People (commonly known as the *Ortodoxos*), which in 1952 put up as a

[34] The Platt Amendment, named after its author, Senator Orville Platt of Connecticut, was attached to an army appropriation bill passed by the US Congress in 1901, which provided for the termination of US military government in Cuba following the war with Spain but imposed certain conditions qualifying Cuban independence. These conditions, the most important of which gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuban domestic affairs whenever it deemed necessary, were incorporated in the Cuban constitution in June 1901 and had the effect of limiting the Cuban people's right of revolution.

[35] *The Communist International* (Russian ed.), No. 9, March 20, 1935, pp. 48–51.

[36] E. L. Nitoburg, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

[37] *Rundschau über Politik Wirtschaft und Arbeiterbewegung* (Basel), No. 50, Sept. 25, 1935. (This was the renamed German edition of *Inprecorr*, set up in Switzerland after Hitler's rise to power.)

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] Quoted in Alberto Baeza Flores, *Las cadenas vienen de lejos*, Mexico City, 1960, p. 111.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

candidate for parliament one of its adherents—Fidel Castro.

Notwithstanding the reported Communist united-front overture of February 1935, it was actually some time before the Cuban party could bring itself to undertake the serious pursuit of united or popular-front tactics. Even after the abortive March strike, it still did not clearly realize—as the Cuban delegate to the Seventh Comintern Congress (presumably Blas Roca) himself stated—"that the need for united-front tactics had become even more imperative in the new situation." [40] Not until its session in early 1936 did the party Central Committee finally come out with a re-analysis of the Cuban situation, which stated:

The Cuban revolution is at present passing through its national phase, and in this phase the revolutionary role played by other strata of the population besides the proletariat and the peasants must not be underestimated. . . . all strata of the population ranging from the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie, fraternally linked by a common interest in the liberation of our country, can and must build a broad popular front against the foreign oppressors. . . .[41]

But it was easier for the Commmunists to beat the propaganda drums for a popular front than to organize one. In January 1936, Cuba held a presidential election in which neither the Communists nor the *Autenticos* were legally allowed to participate. The victor was Miguel Mariano Gomez, a highly popular ex-mayor of Havana and liberal politician. Though initially favored by Batista, he was in fact the most "progressive" of the three competing candidates. The Communists, however, only realized this months later when Gomez, not long after taking office, became involved in a power struggle with Batista, who finally succeeded in engineering his impeachment by a supine parliament in December 1936. But even if the Communists had recognized Gomez' "progressive" character earlier, the formation of a popular front with the forces supporting him would have been beyond the realm of possibility. Indeed, the Communists' sole and very meager success in winning outside allies was the formation of a united committee comprising their own representatives, the Cuban *Apristas* (a small group which had embraced the ideas of the Peruvian Victor Haya de la Torre), some members of the Young Cuba organization, and representatives of several other small groups formed by Cuban political exiles in the United States. This committee remained a meaningless and ephemeral creation. As for Grau San Martin's *Autenticos*, they shunned collaboration with the Communists, and so did the rest of the Young Cuba members, who shortly afterwards merged with the *Autenticos*.

It is worth noting that the Communists even then were still censuring their "petty-bourgeois" allies for their putschist propensities, while conversely they were looked upon by the national revolutionaries as too peaceful and moderate. Thus, a leading Communist, Cesar Vilar, charged in late 1937 that both the *Autenticos* and the Young Cuba organization had engaged in putschist tactics which facilitated "the realization of Batista's reactionary dictatorship." [42] (Interestingly enough, more than two decades later, Blas Roca—with at least indirect reference to a "putschist" named Castro—echoed much the same complaint in claiming that the Communist Party had "enlightened the masses about the error of insurrectionism and made it clear that the only path to victory lies in organizing the masses. Yet the reactionaries [sic] have accused the Communist Party of betrayal. . ." [43]

After the removal of Gomez, Vice-President Federico Laredo Bru assumed the presidency, but the real ruler of Cuba was Batista, whom Comintern spokesmen now began attacking as a fascist dictator and "an imitator of Mussolini and Hitler." In a statement issued in December 1936, the Central Committee of the CPUSA declared:

. . . the issue of democracy *vs.* fascist dictatorship has been sharply raised by the putsch of Colonel Batista. After vainly trying to create a mass base for his dictatorship by demagogic methods, he has carried out—with the help of Wall Street bankers and the sugar trust—an attack on the lawful Gomez government in order to destroy it and, with it, every movement for real democracy in Cuba.[44]

A similar view was later echoed by Cesar Vilar in his article cited above. Describing Batista as a friend of Spanish dictator Franco and a man who committed daily provocations against the people, he declared that nothing could be worse than the realization of Batista's manifest goal of making himself president of Cuba. "The opposition parties," he added, "are against any future government under Batista, because such a government would be even more reactionary than the present one." [45]

Popular Front With Batista

Against this background, it must surely be one of history's most ironic twists that it was none other than the Communists who provided Batista with the mass

[40] Rundschau . . . (Basel), No. 60, Oct. 30, 1935.
[41] Hell, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

[42] "The Military Dictatorship in Cuba and the Struggle for Democracy," in *Communist International* (Russian ed.), January 1938.
[43] Blas Roca, *Las Experiencias de Cuba*, Havana, 1959, pp. 1–11.
[44] Rundschau . . . (Basel), No. 2, Jan. 14, 1937.
[45] Vilar, *loc. cit.* (fn. 42).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

base that he had hitherto sought in vain. For their part, the Communists, having been outlawed virtually from the party's birth in 1925, saw advantages to be gained by proffering their cooperation to Batista in return for the legalization of the party. As for Batista, he was basically neither a "fascist" nor a "reactionary" —nor even a military dictator in the classical mold. A mulatto from the lower class who never tried to conceal his origins, he was ambitious, keenly interested in enriching himself and his friends, and yet at the same time anxious to appear as a "democrat" and proponent of social reform.[46] From 1936 on, he aspired to win the presidency in a free election, but he was looked upon with mistrust by the big landowners and upper bourgeoisie, while the "national revolutionaries" regarded him as their archenemy. He consequently turned to the Communists, fully confident that he could use them for his own purposes.

The legalization process was gradual. The first step, taken in late 1937, was the recognition as a legal party of a sort of Communist-front organization called the *Partido Union Revolucionaria* (Party of Revolutionary Union) headed by Juan Marinello, an intellectual whose close links with the Communists were a matter of common knowledge. This was followed shortly afterward by the proclamation of a general political amnesty. Then, starting May 1, 1938, the Communists—even though the party had not yet been officially legalized—were permitted to launch a daily newspaper called *Noticias de Hoy* (usually referred to simply as *Hoy*) under the editorship of Anibal Escalante, one of the top Communist leaders. In June of the same year, the party Central Committee was able to hold, openly and without interference, its Tenth Plenum, which adopted its first, rather restrained pro-Batista resolutions. Finally, on September 23, 1938, the party was fully legalized, subsequently merging with the *Partido Union Revolucionaria* to form the *Union Revolucionaria Comunista* (Communist Revolutionary Union), which held its first congress in January 1939.

The Communists' entry into this peculiar kind of "popular front" with Batista naturally evoked both anger and confusion in Cuban national-revolutionary and democratic circles. As Raul Roa, now Castro's foreign minister, later wrote in retrospect,

The Communists' offer of support to Batista in return for their own legalization caused indescribable confusion and contributed to the intensification of the crisis in which the revolutionary movement found itself. From then on, the labor movement was subordinated to the requirements of coexistence with the government and the electoral interests of the Communist Party.[47]

Needless to say, Comintern spokesmen sought to present the developments in Cuba before world opinion in a quite different light. An article published in the renamed German edition of *Inprecorr* in August 1938 offered this curious explanation:

Cuba has made important strides towards the restoration of democracy. Under the slogan "Unity of all anti-Batista forces," the Cuban people have found the basis for a minimal united action which has forced the dictator Batista to restore a number of democratic liberties. . . . All attempts to manipulate the press have proven futile, and today the Cuban people have the daily people's [sic] newspaper *Hoy* and the weekly review *Mediodia*, which courageously stand up for the rights of the people.[48]

Some eight months later, in an article surveying the international labor movement at the beginning of 1939, the Russian edition of *Communist International* boasted, with equal disregard for the truth, that "the workers [of Cuba] have been successful in obtaining the legalization of the Communist Party. The entire working class took part in this struggle."[49] Again, commenting in January 1939 on the developments in Cuba, the German edition of the same Comintern organ acknowledged that the Tenth Plenum of the Cuban party's Central Committee had come to the conclusion that Batista was "no longer the focal point of the forces of reaction," but it hastened to add:

The Communists stress that they do not thereby recognize and support Colonel Baptista [sic] as a democrat. The party takes note that Colonel Baptista has taken only some first steps along the path of respect for the democratic demands of the people.[50]

In whatever light one may choose to view the party's understanding with Batista, its fortunes quickly prospered in the sunshine of official favor. Whereas the party reportedly had some 5,000 members in 1937 when it was still only semi-legal,[51] the 347 delegates who attended the first congress of the *Union Revolucionaria Comunista* in January 1939 claimed to represent a total membership of 23,000.[52] More im-

[46] It should be noted here that some of the most important laws benefiting labor and tenant farmers were enacted under Batista's auspices, including the so-called "sugar coordination" law which in effect made it impossible to dispossess small and tenant farmers, and which antedated Batista's collaboration with the Communists. It may also be mentioned that one of the issues in his conflict with President Gomez in 1936 was Batista's proposal to levy a special tax on sugar production in order to finance rural educational facilities at the expense of the sugar barons, a proposal which Gomez opposed.

[47] *XV Años Despues*, Havana, 1950, p. 219.

[48] R. A. Martinez, *Lateinamerika drei Jahre nach dem VII. Weltkongress der K.I., in Rundschau . . .*, Aug. 28, 1938.

[49] No. 4, April 1939.

[50] "The Struggle for Democracy in Cuba," *Kommunistische Internationale* (Paris), Jan. 20, 1939.

[51] Blas Roca, *Las Experiencias . . ., op. cit.*, p. 8.

[52] This same figure was cited by Dmitri Manuilsky in a report on the world Communist movement to the 18th Congress of the CPSU in 1939. See *Rundschau . . .*, March 31, 1939.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

portant, Communists (among them Lazaro Peña) assumed the leadership of the newly-established and all-embracing *Confederacion de Trabajadores de Cuba* (CTC), which entered into close collaboration with the Ministry of Labor. Later, the Communists were even to be granted their own radio station (*"Mil Diez"*).

The sudden switch in the international Communist line resulting from the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, followed only a few months later by the outbreak of war in Europe, had a much less adverse impact on the Cuban party than on many other Communist parties. Prior to the pact, the Comintern line had called for an international united front against fascism; but with the signing of the Soviet-Nazi accord and the start of the war, Communists everywhere were called upon to oppose involvement in an "imperialistic" conflict.

This the Cuban Communists could do without compromising their collaboration with Batista, who—at least until the middle of 1941—had no inclination to let Cuba become embroiled in a faraway European conflict. Moreover, the *Autenticos*, who were the Communists' chief rivals, also were opposed to Cuban involvement, partly because of their hostility towards the United States, which was already leaning towards intervention on the side of the anti-Hitler forces.

Even so, the Nazi-Soviet pact caused a minor crisis in the Cuban party's ranks. A socialist group led by Juan Arevalo, which had joined with the Communists in organizing the *Union Revolucionaria*, turned against the new political course taken by the Soviet Union, as did many democrats; and Communist party membership began to slump, dropping to a reported 14,800 by 1941.[53]

Elections for a Constitutent Assembly to frame a new constitution for Cuba were held in November 1939. The Communists took part in the election campaign as part of the "Social Democratic" Batista coalition, winning six out of the total 76 Assembly seats. The majority of seats (41) actually went to a heterogeneous anti-Batista coalition, with 18 seats going to the *Autenticos*, 15 to the Conservatives, and the rest to other groups (including four for the ABC).

In the drafting of the 1940 Constitution, the Communists and *Autenticos* vied with each other in their efforts to make it as "progressive" as possible. The resultant document was designed to turn Cuba into a welfare state, but many of its prescriptions were unrealizable because they went far beyond the country's capabilities. Besides stipulating all the democratic freedoms, the Constitution also guaranteed the "right to work" of every citizen and provided for a 44-hour maximum workweek and four weeks of paid vacation per year for all workers and employees, for the establishment of arbitration boards and labor courts in which the unions would have a decisive voice, and for restrictions on the right of employers to dismiss workers. Article 90 proscribed large landholdings. Another article fixed the salary of every primary-school teacher at one-millionth of the state budget (a provision which, if it could have been carried out, would have placed Cuba's primary-school teachers among the highest-paid in all of Latin America). It is incidentally of no little interest that this Constitution, afterwards praised so lavishly by the Communists, expressly proscribed any political party which did not stand for the principles of representative democracy.

To the extent that the provisions of the 1940 Constitution became reality—and this was largely true in those areas affecting municipal workers and especially industrial labor, as well as the regular employees of sugar mills and of major banks and commercial establishments—they had an adverse impact on productivity.[54] The Constitution also brought about a far-reaching fusion of the government and the union movement, with the result that the status of wage earners now depended less on their own efforts than on the paternalistic intervention of the Ministry of Labor, the new labor courts, and the President of the Republic. The labor movement and, with it, the Communist Party became, so to speak, "integral elements of the state." Once again, the leaders of "Creole communism" were critically dependent on their ability to maintain good and close relations with whatever government was in power.

The Communists were the first to support Batista's candidacy for the presidency in the July 1940 election following promulgation of the new Constitution. His election was only made certain, however, by the entry into the Batista coalition in March of the sharply anti-Communist Conservative Party. The Communists protested the entry of the Conservatives, which tended to undermine the credibility of the "progressive" character of the Batista coalition (and of the Communists' own policy), but they were powerless to block it. When the balloting took place in mid-July, Batista—the onetime army sergeant, later to become the dictator of Cuba and the friend of the North Americans and propertied Cubans—captured 60 percent of the vote and thus won the presidency for a four-year term.

As a result of their increased freedom of action and more flexible policies, the Communists had indeed grown in strength and influence, but they had also

[53] Hell, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

[54] See International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Report on Cuba*, Baltimore, 1951.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

widened the gulf between themselves and the "national revolutionaries" and changed the character of the party. As two North American observers commented retrospectively in 1962, the Cuban Communists after 1934 put forward a fairly consistent domestic program "calling for democratic and honest government, expanded social benefits, and economic advancement of urban and rural workers," but their "fortunes shifted mainly according to their relations with the government in power." [55] This last observation, though essentially correct, seems a rather charitable characterization of the Communists' political relationships. Certainly, by 1940, or even as early as 1937–38, the Communist Party of Blas Roca bore little if any resemblance to the original party of Jose Mella and Martinez Villena.

The Cuban Communists in World War II

Nazi Germany's invasion of the USSR in June 1941 brought a new turnabout in the international Communist line, which switched overnight from condemnation of the European war as an "imperialist" struggle to its exaltation as a "peoples' war" against Nazism and Fascism. For the Cuban Communists, as for Communists everywhere, this was a far easier switch than the one they had had to make in 1939 following the Hitler-Stalin pact. They promptly came out as fervent champions of democracy and the war against the Axis, and in so doing, they were in complete harmony with President Batista, whose foreign policy was by now closely attuned to that of the United States. In December of 1941, Cuba followed on the heels of Washington in declaring war on Japan and the Axis powers.

The Communists abruptly ceased all tirades and demonstrations against both US imperialism and the domestic bourgeoisie. A political truce was proclaimed, and national unity in the cause of anti-fascism became the supreme slogan. The Communist-controlled CTC, at its 1942 congress, voted to forego all strike action for the duration of the war. The United States underwent a sudden transformation from an imperialistic oppressor to an admired, democratic ally. In the first edition of his book, *Los Fundamentos del Socialismo en Cuba*, published in Havana in 1943, Communist party chief Blas Roca wrote (p. 111):

The Cuban people need and desire close and cordial relations with the United States because of the countless advantages such relations bring to them. This relationship must be continued after the conclusion of the war because it is absolutely essential to the fruitful development of the Cuban economy, on which the nation's progress depends. [56]

Small wonder, then, that President Batista decided to reward the Communists by inviting them to participate directly in the government. Juan Marinello, head of the *Union Revolucionaria Comunista,* was the first to enter the government as minister without portfolio in March 1943, to be followed later by Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. In a report to the National Executive Committee of the Union, Blas Roca hailed the formation of "a government of national unity" including "our chairman, Juan Marinello" as "the greatest of all the triumphs of the *Union Revolucionaria Comunista.*" [57]

The Cuban Communists were now pursuing a line that was almost as far removed from orthodox communism as that of the wartime leader of the US Communist Party, Earl Browder. Easily the most "revisionist" of all Communist party leaders of the war period, Browder preached the practical end of revolutionary class struggle, the peaceful transformation of capitalism, the disappearance of imperialism, and lasting peaceful coexistence between the Soviet Union and the democratic-capitalist world. He even went so far, in May 1944, as to put through the formal dissolution of the CPUSA and its replacement by a Communist Political Association pledged to shelve the issue of socialism for the sake of national unity.

The Cuban Communists did not emulate this latter action, partly because they were not asked to, and partly because dissolution of the party would have caused complications in view of its representation in the parliament and government, its now sizable bureaucratic apparatus and valuable property, and its unquestioned leadership of the labor movement. The party did, however, change its name in 1944 to *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP)—a change which had considerable symbolic significance.

The Second National Conference of the PSP, held in September 1944, reaffirmed the party's allegiance to the principles of Browder, Batista—and Marx! "The Marxists," declared the policy resolution of the conference, "stand for national unity and for its continuation, extension, and consolidation under such conditions as may prevail in Cuba after the war. The policy of national unity, for the Marxists, is a long-range [*de largo alcance*] policy." Blas Roca stressed the same point in February 1945 when he stated that

[55] Wyatt MacGaffey and Clifford R. Barnett, *Cuba,* New Haven, The American University, 1962, p. 128.

[56] This passage was excised from postwar editions of Roca's book.

[57] Blas Roca, *Por que y para que participan los Comunistas en el Cabinete?* (Report presented to the National Executive Committee of the URC, March 26, 1943), Havana, 1943, p. 3.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the party's espousal of class collaboration was "no momentary and ephemeral policy, but a long-range and enduring one on the progressive road toward the conquest of all rights of the working class." [58]

(To skip briefly ahead of our story, when French Communist leader Jacques Duclos, after a personal meeting with Stalin, launched his attack on Browderism in a letter published in the Paris Communist journal *Cahiers du Communisme* in April 1945, he explicitly indicted the Cuban Communists along with the US party leader for their advocacy of class collaboration and continuing Communist-capitalist peaceful coexistence after the war. Responding to this attack at a meeting of the PSP National Executive Committee in June 1945, Blas Roca flatly rejected Duclos' charge that the Teheran and Yalta agreements were mere "diplomatic documents" which the US and Cuban Communists were wrongly attempting to transform "into a political platform of class peace." These agreements, declared Roca, "are regarded by us as solemn and formal undertakings which constitute a genuine platform for mankind's struggle to achieve a peace that will endure for several generations. . . . We consider the agreements, which fully conform with our views, to provide the basis for our activity." [59])

At the same time that they zealously pursued the Browderite line, the Cuban Communists were lavishing praise on Batista as a "great democrat," "the great man of our national politics who embodies Cuba's sacred ideals," and "the man who is leading the fatherland along the road of dignity and progress." [60] They also warmly defended him against his political adversaries—a fact which Batista gratefully acknowledged in a letter addressed to Blas Roca and published in *Hoy* on June 13, 1944. The letter read:

My dear Blas! With reference to your letter transmitted to me by our mutual friend, Minister Without Portfolio Dr. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, I am happy to acknowledge that my government has received and today continues to receive effective and loyal support from the *Partido Socialista Popular*, its leadership and its masses.

Meanwhile, the party's electoral strength showed a marked upsurge, reaching a new high of about 120,000 in 1944 as compared with the 80,000 votes polled by the Communists in the 1942 parliamentary elections. Yet, according to official Communist sources, the party had only 14,692 dues-paying members in 1944. [61] Membership figures for the Cuban party are not very meaningful, however, because they showed wide fluctuations during the years of the party's legal existence —and in any case the average party member of the popular-front period was hardly a Bolshevik in either the ideological or an organizational sense.

With the presidential election scheduled for the summer of 1944 approaching, Batista declined to run for a second term. His Social Democratic coalition, which included the Communists, put forward Dr. Carlos Saladrigas, who had held the premiership under Batista, as its candidate to run against the opposition parties' nominee, former President Grau San Martin. The PSP defended its support of Saladrigas—a one-time leader of the ABC, which the Communists had long denounced as fascist—by claiming that "Saladrigas symbolizes, for a thousand reasons, the continuation of the progressive, democratic and populist course of Fulgencio Batista." [62]

As a party, the Communists scored a substantial success in the election, the number of Communist votes reaching 130,000, or about 8 percent of all the ballots cast. Nevertheless, Saladrigas went down to defeat, and Grau emerged the winner. This prompted a quick change of tack by the Communists, with Blas Roca proclaiming the victory of the party's erstwhile bitter foe to be a "triumph of the people." The Communists, indeed, had good reason to be optimistic about the chances of preserving their political position despite Saladrigas' defeat. Their own share of the popular vote had risen, and Grau did not have a large enough majority in parliament to be able to form a government without the support of the Communists, whose representatives could now tip the balance.

The Communists and the Autenticos

The leaders of the PSP hastened to offer their support to the new chief of state, provided he was willing to demonstrate the progressive character of his government by sympathetic treatment of the Communists. The party's main concern was to protect its leadership monopoly in the unions against a threatened takeover by the office-hungry "labor commissions" of the *Autenticos*, and Grau, needing Communist support, agreed to the bargain. In the face of protests from his own party, Grau left Lazaro Peña and his associates in undisturbed control of organized labor, while Juan Marinello was appointed Vice-President of the Senate. In return, the Communists came out as strongly for Grau as they had for Batista.

The social policy of the new government was in fact no less "progressive" than that of its predecessor.

[58] Blas Roca and Lazaro Peña, *La Colaboracion entre obreros y patronos*, Havana, 1945, p. 18.
[59] *En Defensa del Pueblo* (Statements by Blas Roca, R. Rodriguez, and Manuel Lazardo before the National Executive Committee of the PSP, June 22–23, 1945), Havana, 1945, pp. 9 and 16.
[60] *Hoy*, Jan. 16 and Feb. 5, 1944.
[61] Fabio Grobart, in *Fundamentos* (Havana), December 1946, p. 348.
[62] *Hoy*, May 13, 1944, quoted in Alberto Baez Flores, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In some circles, indeed, the liberal interpretation of democratic freedoms was carried to such lengths as to bring certain sectors of public life to the verge of chaos. If there was freedom for the ordinary citizens to criticize everyone, including the government, without restraint, there was also freedom for the new masters of the government to enrich themselves, as well as freedom for the many gangster-like groups of revolutionaries, who had been kept pretty well in check under Batista, to gun each other down and prey upon other citizens. To cap it all, the absolute freedom accorded to the mass media made these abuses appear worse than they actually were, leading to a crisis and an eventual split in the *Autentico* movement, with a group under Eduardo Chibas breaking away to form a new party known as the *Ortodoxos*.

With the end of the war and the re-emergence of conflicts between the Soviet Union and the West, the PSP now began a difficult process of ideological rearmament. Blas Roca, as noted earlier, at first tried to stick to the Browderite line in the face of the Duclos attack of April 1945, but finding himself under growing pressure from many of his own party officials who were openly turning against the no longer fashionable wartime strategy of national political truce, he was eventually forced to retreat. As early as July 1945, he admitted that "all of our more recent documents stand in need of revision because they reveal dangerous errors," the principal one having been the party's belief that the United States and Great Britain would actually adhere to the resolutions taken in Teheran. He also acknowledged that it had not been "realized with sufficient clarity that capitalism would prove incapable of overcoming its inner contradictions," and that it had been an illusion to think that imperialism and colonialism would vanish.[63] Roca's colleague, Juan Marinello, wrote a month later that "we went astray because, without sufficient reflection and deeper analysis . . . we adopted criteria and methods . . . based on an authority and information not accessible to us." Finally, in February 1946, Roca carried this line to its logical conclusion in blaming the Cuban party's mistakes on "the corrupt anti-Marxist theories of Earl Browder." [64]

Roca's February statement followed on the heels of the Third National Conference of the PSP, which took place in Havana in January. The foreign speakers included William Z. Foster, the hardline US Communist leader who had replaced Browder. With the proceedings being broadcast by the Communists' Radio *Mil Diez*, Foster seized the occasion to launch an attack on Roca, but careful listeners were able to detect, with some surprise, that Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, who interpreted Foster's words into Spanish, softened and sometimes even omitted the US delegate's criticisms of Roca. For his part, Foster was probably more than a little astonished when, at the conclusion of the Conference, Roca was reconfirmed as secretary-general of the PSP.

The first signs of the coming Cold War, however, were not enough to trouble the close relations between Grau and the Communists, which continued undisturbed until after the parliamentary elections of June 1946. The Communists were jubilant over the election results, with the PSP garnering a total of 176,000 votes, or over 10 percent of all the ballots cast—its all-time highwater mark. In his report to the party leadership, Blas Roca boasted that "the outcome of the elections constitutes a grand confirmation (*un gran respaldo*) of the popular and progressive policy of Dr. Grau. . . . The triumph achieved by the Popular Socialists together with the *Autenticos* cannot but consolidate, broaden, and deepen their alliance." He also noted that the party had received 43,000 more votes than the number of its *afiliados* (*i.e.*, voters registered as affiliates of a particular party)—"a very rare phenomenon in Cuba, where the parties usually have fewer voters than *afiliados*." [65]

Roca's jubilation was premature and not entirely warranted. For he appeared to overlook the fact that the *Autenticos* had gained more votes than had the Communists and, most important of all, had strengthened their position in parliament to the point where Grau no longer needed the support of the PSP representatives. This soon led to a challenge of the Communists' leadership of organized labor. The "workers section" of the *Autenticos* felt that the time was ripe to take over control of the unions with the aid of the government (particularly after the appointment of *Autentico* leader Carlos Prio Socarras as Minister of Labor in 1947). After an intense struggle sometimes marked by violence, the *Autenticos*, supported by other anti-Communist unionists, finally seized control of the CTC leadership in the summer of 1947, and the "Popular Socialists" split away to establish their own CTC. Labor Minister Prio Socarras, however, refused to grant the Communist-led confederation government recognition, without which its affiliated unions could not appear before arbitration boards, call legal strikes, or conclude valid collective agree-

[63] Blas Roca, *En Defensa del Pueblo*, Havana, 1945; and article in *Fundamentos*, July 1945, pp. 44 ff.

[64] Statements quoted in Stuart Cole Blasier, *The Cuban and Chilean Parties—Instruments of Soviet Policy* (doctoral dissertation), Columbia University, 1955, p. 98.

[65] F. Calderio (Blas Roca), *El Triunfo Popular en las elecciones* (Report to the PSP National Executive Committee, June 22, 1946), Havana, 1946, pp. 3, 13.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments. Its membership quickly declined and a short while later vanished altogether.

The Communist Party, too, began to lose members and influence. The Cold War was now starting to gather momentum, and the PSP, softened by the long period of "class collaboration," was ill prepared for it. In a typical display of the factual distortion characteristic of Communist historiography, Jürgen Hell writes that "the Cold War . . . raged in Cuba as a white terror." [66] Actually, the Communist Party (under the Popular Socialist Party label) remained legal until the summer of 1953. None of its leaders was arrested, and the party was able to hold meetings, engage in propaganda, and take part in elections, for the most part without interference. The loss of the government's favor did cost the Communists the right to operate their own radio station, and it is true that a few Communist leaders lost their lives as a consequence, not of anti-Communist terror, but rather of the gangster-like violence that became prevalent in the Cuban labor movement. The most prominent Communist casualty was Jesus Menendez, a member of parliament and leader of the sugar workers, who was shot and killed by an army officer in January 1948.

A new presidential election took place in June 1948. Prio Socarras was put forward by the *Autenticos* as their candidate, Dr. Nuñez Portuondo by the Liberals, and Eduardo Chibas by the *Ortodoxos*, with Prio Socarras winning the election. The PSP also put forward a candidate, Juan Marinello, who received some 140,000 votes, or about 7.5 percent of all the valid ballots cast.

There is relatively little reliable information regarding the subsequent organizational development of the party. PSP membership appears to have dropped to barely 10,000 in 1948, but after that it began to rise again—which is the best proof that the Communists were not subjected to persecution, let alone terror. In any event, Blas Roca was able to claim in 1950 that party membership had climbed back up to a figure of 19,241.[67] But it was perhaps more the quality than the size of the party membership that concerned the PSP leaders in this period. Hell quotes Blas Roca as saying in 1948:

A party cannot be good if its members are bad. A party cannot be an advance guard if it is full of laggards. We forgot that simple truth.[68]

According to Hell, Roca went on to acknowledge that neither the party's members nor its *afiliados* could be expected to play any significant role once the party were proscribed or subjected to persecution. With such material and such an organization, he warned, it would be difficult to carry on any effective work.

The fact was that the party's personnel, its ideological outlook and organizational form were all molded by the politics of the past, and as we shall see, the influence of this tradition continued to be reflected in the party's policies and strategy when Batista established his new dictatorship or—to put it more correctly—stumbled into a dictatorship which he did not want.

The Return of Batista

The spring of 1952 found Cuba preparing for another presidential election to choose a successor to Prio Socarras. It was to be a three-cornered contest between the *Autentico* candidate, Carlos Hevia; the nominee of the *Ortodoxos*, Roberto Agromonte; and ex-President Batista, who had returned to Cuba in 1948 after several years in the United States and had formed his own political organization, the Unitary Action Party. Batista's party waged a vigorous and costly campaign sharply critical of the incumbent *Autentico* administration, but all opinion polls in early 1952 indicated that the ex-President, though still enjoying considerable popularity among the Cuban lower classes, could not hope to repeat his 1940 victory. Batista chose not to gamble on the election. In the early morning hours of March 10, 1952, again with army backing, he seized power through a bloodless *coup d'état*.

But Batista, at least at first, showed no intention of setting up a harsh dictatorship. Immediately upon assuming power as Provisional President, he pledged that all democratic freedoms would be respected, and above all that the gains of the lower social strata would be preserved and extended; he called in the labor leaders and assured them that he would not interfere with their activities as long as they did not turn against him; and he immediately raised the wages of soldiers and policemen. No restriction was placed on the activities of the political parties—again provided they did not attack the new regime too brazenly. Nor were there any immediate indications of significant political opposition to Batista. The ousted *Autentico* leaders, who had lost popular support because of their corruption and tolerance of open gangster terrorism in the streets, had taken asylum in foreign embassies and shortly afterwards were allowed to leave the country. The highly popular *Ortodoxo* leader, Eduardo Chibas, had committed suicide the preceding year, and there were few political leaders of democratic orientation who commanded enough public support to be able to challenge Batista with any hope of success.

It was not long, however, before voices critical of the new regime began to be raised in the press and

[66] Hell, *op. cit.*, p. 295.
[67] Blas Roca, in *Fundamentos*, April 1950, p. 333.
[68] Hell, *op. cit.*, pp. 289–90.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on radio and television. Batista responded by promising that he would call general elections as soon as possible—a promise which he first tried to keep in November 1953, although these elections had to be cancelled because the opposition parties refused to participate.

Meanwhile, as time went on, the Batista regime did indeed begin to display much more reprehensible features. Partly responsible for this was the terror campaign launched mainly by student revolutionaries, which prompted Batista and his henchmen to resort to measures of counterterror, accompanied by the appointment of savagely sadistic elements to key positions in the police. Yet, even during the last years of the Batista dictatorship, there were intermittent periods of relative political relaxation. It must be recalled, for instance, that the regime in 1955 proclaimed a general political amnesty, one of the beneficiaries of which was Fidel Castro, then serving a long prison term for his attempted attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953. It may also be mentioned that four years later, after Castro had already launched his armed struggle against the Batista dictatorship in the mountains of eastern Cuba, his programmatic "Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra" was freely published in Cuba's most widely read weekly, *Bohemia* (July 28, 1957), with a circulation of over 500,000 copies.

The opposition to Batista sprang almost exclusively from among the middle-class intellectuals, especially the students. From the very first days, the University of Havana became a citadel of "anti-Batistianos," with loudspeakers all over the campus calling for war against the Batista regime. The first anti-Batista conspiracy was organized by a professor of philosophy named Garcia-Barcena within a few weeks after the March 1952 coup, but was discovered and suppressed. And it was from among Barcena's young fellow conspirators that Fidel Castro recruited some of the followers who joined him in his abortive attack on the Moncada Barracks a year later.

The Communists, Batista, and Castro

When Batista first regained power, some leaders of the still legal PSP may have entertained hope that some form of collaboration might again be arranged between them and their former protector. Most of the leadership, however, recognized from the beginning that, given the changed world situation and the Cold War, all such hopes were illusory. Only a few lesser Communist figures (a minor PSP leader in Camaguey by the name of Sotolongo, three middle-level functionaries named Galan, Chirino, and Alonso, and two lawyers, Perez Lamy and Arsenio Gonzalez, who played inconsequential roles in the party) went over to Batista.[69]

By and large, the PSP accepted the situation following the coup calmly. On May 23, 1952, Blas Roca wrote in *Hoy* that it was becoming increasingly clear "that the new government . . . does not differ in character from the Prio government," under which the Communists, though no longer able to operate as freely as in the past, had suffered no real persecution. Already in early April, however, diplomatic relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union had been broken off by Moscow over a minor diplomatic incident,[70] and the Batista regime's attitude towards the local Communists began to stiffen perceptibly. The stiffening process began with the establishment of a special police section (BRAC) charged with combatting Communist activity and eventually culminated in the official proscription of the PSP in late October 1953.[71] Police action against the Communists was relatively mild, however, by comparison with the campaign of suppression later waged against the terroristic anti-Batista groups of students and bourgeois intellectuals. Few Communists were subjected to the imprisonment and torture commonly meted out to young people accused of being connected with these groups, and some of the most prominent PSP leaders, including Juan Marinello and Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, went on living virtually unmolested in the Cuban capital. Even the party's information organs, though now illegal, continued to circulate without too much difficulty, despite a measure of official interference.

The relative mildness of the government's anti-Communist measures can readily be explained. For one thing, the workers, upon whom the Communists mainly depended for support, took a passive attitude towards the Batista regime, partly because their economic situation had improved, and partly because the regime appeared ready to pursue a course of social reform. Another reason was that the Communists, in keeping with their own past tradition, rejected any form of terrorism and kept on propagandizing for a "united front" of all democratic forces and mass action, both of which were practically impossible in view of the enduring antagonism between the Communists and the "democratic" elements that were

[69] There is no evidence whatever to support the theory that these defections were part of a new technique adopted by the Cuban party to permit underground Communist collaboration with the Batista regime.

[70] The incident arose when a Cuban security officer attempted to search the luggage of two Soviet official couriers arriving in Cuba. The Soviet government charged a violation of diplomatic immunity. See Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

[71] Jürgen Hell gives November 2, 1963, as the date when the party was outlawed (*op. cit.*, p. 305), without any attempt to reconcile the lateness of the government's action with his distorted description of the Batista regime as having been from the first an "openly terroristic dictatorship of the sugar bourgeoisie" (p. 298).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pushed aside by Batista and provided most of the recruits for the terrorist groups. Ever since 1947, the Communists had done their utmost to picture the successive *Autentico* governments preceding Batista's return to power as "anti-democratic" dictatorships.

Interestingly enough, this was exactly the opposite of the picture drawn by Fidel Castro when he was tried on October 16, 1953, following his first, unsuccessful putsch against the Batista regime. In his defense plea before the court, as published ten years later (probably in a specially-edited version), he stated:

I shall tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a republic. It had a constitution, laws, freedoms, its president, its parliament, its courts. Everyone was able to meet freely with others, to discuss and to write freely. The people were dissatisfied with the government, but they had the authority to replace it with another, and in fact only a few days remained before this would have happened. Public opinion was respected. . . . There were political parties, debates on the radio, polemics on television, and mass meetings. The people believed that the past would never return. They were absolutely confident that no one would ever commit the crime of attacking their democratic institutions. Poor people! One morning they awoke with a shock. During the night, ghosts of the past had conspired and seized power. It was no bad dream, it was grim reality. A man named Fulgencio Batista had committed the horrible crime that no one expected.[72]

On the other hand, the unsympathetic light in which the Cuban Communists viewed Castro's attack on the Moncada Barracks was made plain by a declaration of the party leadership published in August 1953 in the CPUSA organ *Daily Worker*. It stated unequivocally: "We condemn the putschist methods—characteristic of bourgeois groups—which were evident in the adventuristic attempt to capture the barracks at Santiago. The heroism displayed by the participants was misdirected and sterile." [73] Nor did this attitude show any change over the next several years. On February 28, 1957, nearly three months after Castro and 26 followers landed by boat from Mexico on the coast of Cuba's Oriente Province to launch their new drive against Batista, the Communist leadership addressed a letter to Castro's "July 26 Movement." As later published in the illegally-circulated Communist weekly *Carta Semanal* of June 27, 1957, it read:

Our party has already informed you and Fidel Castro . . . that we definitively reject the tactics and plans you have developed. We told you in all frankness at that time that the correct course is not the course of isolated actions and expeditions, which is not appropriate to existing subjective and objective conditions, and that we condemn actions by individuals or small groups undertaken without the collaboration of the masses. . . . We further stated that the correct approach . . . lies in the unity and common action of all opposition forces . . . in a struggle to eliminate tyranny and achieve the victory of democratic forces.

Going on to specifically condemn Castro's guerrillas for resorting to terrorist tactics, the burning of sugarcane fields, and other forms of sabotage, the letter declared:

In general, individual acts of terror merely provide the tyranny with new pretexts for its crimes. . . . The workers and people cannot be drawn into the struggle by terroristic acts, and even less can be accomplished by threats and sabotage against enterprises.

By about February 1958, following considerable internal debate, the Communist leadership appears to have reached an initial decision to try to come to some sort of understanding with Castro.[74] But even after that, the PSP remained firmly committed to its basic positions, as evidenced by a lengthy article written by Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and published in the French Communist weekly *France Nouvelle* (July 17–23, 1958). Setting out to clarify the party's policy and strategy, particularly in relation to those of Castro's revolutionary movement, Rodriguez asserted that the PSP was far more radical in its demands for structural reform than Castro and what he termed "the left wing" of the July 26 Movement. These demands, he said, included "the immediate nationalization of foreign-controlled public-service enterprises" and an agrarian reform "which would abolish large landholdings and distribute the land free to the poor peasants and farm workers." As for the proper strategy to employ in the struggle to overthrow the Batista regime, Rodriguez argued that the situation was not yet ripe for an attempt at "the direct replacement of Batista by a government of national liberation" because

the tyrant can rely on the support of imperialism, still controls the armed forces . . . and has the support of the big sugar producers and import traders. . . . To overthrow Batista, it is necessary to form a coalition reaching beyond the ranks of the anti-imperialists to include forces which are not committed to anti-imperialism. . . . Therefore, the present strategy of the PSP is based on the necessity of achieving the unity of *all* political parties and groups that are opposed to the government. . . . This unity must be such as to enable

[72] Fidel Castro, *La Historia me absolvera,* Havana, 1963, pp. 103–04.

[73] *Daily Worker* (New York), Aug. 5, 1953, as quoted by Theodore Draper, *Castroism,* New York, 1965, p. 26.

[74] The development of relations between Castro and the Communists has been briefly but very accurately traced by Theodore Draper in his book *Castroism, op. cit.,* pp. 26 ff.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men like Prio Socarras and Grau San Martin to take part in the coalition.

Rodriguez' article clearly showed that the old popular-front concept was still as deeply ingrained in the minds of the Communist leaders as their habitual rejection of all "putschist adventurism." But this poses the question of how the Communists could expect to achieve a popular front when their collaboration was rejected by all anti-Batista forces. This question is all the more relevant because all the other anti-Batista groups and parties were far more sympathetic to Castro than they were to the leaders of the PSP. (It may be mentioned here that part of the money used by Castro to buy the yacht *Granma*, which carried him and his fellow revolutionaries from Mexico to Cuba, was contributed by Prio Socarras.)

Finally, in November 1958, less than four months before Batista's fall, Rodriguez went to the *Sierra Maestra* and concluded an agreement with Castro on behalf of the PSP. By that time, individual Communists and small groups of PSP members were already fighting here and there in the ranks of Castro's revolutionary movement. In that same month, however, the PSP sent a letter under the signature of Blas Roca and Juan Marinello to the Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party of Chile. It read in part:

The tyranny has shown itself incapable of breaking the resistance and struggle of the masses [sic!]. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that this in itself signifies the possibility of an immediate defeat [of the tyranny] since it draws its principal strength from the disunity of the opposition forces. Hence our efforts to achieve a national unity which will put an end to the tyranny and bring to power a democratic coalition government as the first step toward a united-front government of national liberation." [75]

No wonder, then, that Che Guevara made the following statement to a group of Latin American visitors several years later:

In Cuba, the Communist Party did not lead the revolution. It was unable to discern the correct methods of struggle and erred in its estimation of the chances of success. This extremely serious mistake was not fatal here, because we had Fidel and a group of real revolutionaries. In other countries, however, such a mistake might prove very costly and cause the revolution to go astray.[76]

There is a certain element of irony in the fact that Guevara's remarks were reported in the same newspaper which for so many years had been the central organ of the Cuban Communists.

---

[75] Communist Party of Chile, *Documentos del XI Congreso Nacional realizado en Noviembre de 1958*. Santiago, 1959, p. 29.

[76] *Hoy*, Aug. 24, 1963.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED